

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

RULE OF MORGUE

FEAR IS STILL A PLACE SESSION 9

BRAD ANDERSON
ON HIS REISSUED SHOCKER

PLUS!

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AND

A VISIT TO
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16 I LIVE IN THE WEAK AND THE WOUNDED

Intensely psychological and mature, *Season 2* was the antithesis of the teen dramas dominating horror films years ago. Director Brad Anderson takes us back behind the grimy walls of the infamous Denver State Mental Hospital where its former unfolded. **PLUS:** A look at *Season 2*'s sound design, and a top result Europe's oldest horror festival, now a museum dedicated to disease, deformity and the disturbing history of institutionalization.

by MICHAEL DOYLE, DEJAN OGLIMIZIĆ, ALEXANDRIA ING-KANADA and ANDREA BUTLER

24 BEYOND THE WALLS OF BLEAK

At Home With Monsters, Guillermo del Toro's first museum retrospective, premieres this month in Los Angeles with over 500 items representing the scope of the filmmaker's dark obsessions. **PLUS:** Los Angeles County Museum of Art curator Britt Salvesen takes us deeper into the exhibit, and more.

by DAVE ALEXANDER and APRIL SNELLINGS

30 TO THE DAUGHTER... A DEVIL

Seamus Perkins, son of Psycho star Anthony Perkins, channels personal tragedy in his sci-fi thriller *The Blackout's Daughter*.

by SEAN PLUMMER

34 HE STILL MAKES HOUSE CALLS

Doctor Butcher M.D., the epitome of spaghetti splatter, rises from the grave to make his Blu-ray premiere – restored, intact and stronger than ever.

by TIE DORF-MET



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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



REAPPLY ENJOYED your article "Slashed Beauties" (RM#166). Reminds me of my earlier years as a young medic back at a wil-not-be-named military medical school over three decades ago. Possibly, I write that "the beauty within equals that on the surface/dissected grocs." Thanks for a horrifically great article and for triggering a memory.

JUAN PEREZ - CORPUS CREEPY, TEXAS

I **LITERALLY SQUEALED** with unbridled joy when I saw the awesome five-page article on Joe Hill in RM#166! I am a huge fan of his work and it was a real treat getting to read such a fantastic interview in my favourite magazine. Looking even more forward to reading *The President Thanks, Rue Morgue*.

ALISON MCDONNARD, VIA FACEBOOK

MY BUDDY @TheDissem-istress, winning a game mag and a bag of spaghetti at RM's Doctor Butcher M.D. screening **GAPS_ART**, VIA TWITTER



THE ARTICLES on Phen-tasm in RM#166 were great. Only one thing was disappointing: the news that the Siskis twins are going to do a remake of *Rabid*. Really? Will it be better? I doubt it. Hasn't anyone realized that 89 percent of remakes suck? The only horror remake worth a shot is Cronenberg's *The Fly*. And to those who are going to say *Casper's The Thing*, that isn't a remake, it's an actual adaptation of the great 1951 story "Who Goes There?" When will this endless parade of remakes stop? There are literally thousands of novels and screen writers out there, and Hollywood just doesn't have the balls to take a chance on them.

ROB MORGANBEISSER - STATEN ISLAND, NY

GREAT ISSUE, but the Dublin Ghost Story Festival article in RM#166 really caught my attention because I went to Dublin Castle in Dublin. It's very haunted and I remember our tour guide led us to an underground entrance that goes beneath the castle and said that most people will not reach the end, and will turn back. The guide called the underground cave The Fiery Cavern and said that there were ghosts, leprechauns, trolls and faeries there. Ireland has

many mythical ghost stories, it's definitely a land of enchantment.

PAUL DALE ROBERTS - ELK GROVE, CALIFORNIA

YOUR ARTICLES on Phen-tasm /Voyager and Hammer's *Conquish* Due in RM#166 were very well done. Your Classic Cut on the Doctor Who serial "The Ark in Space" had me going into fanboy overload! Finally, I must give praise to John W. Bowen for writing my favourite column: It Came From Bowen's Basement both interests me and makes me laugh at the same time. Keep up the good work.

DEN KASTEN, VIA RUE-MORQUE.COM

BOOOBBOOY, what a great write-up in RM#166, thanks Rue Morgue! I have been a long-time fan of the Phen-tasm franchise. Looking forward to seeing the final chapter. Angus Scrimm was such a class act and I am so fortunate that I had the chance to meet him and the cast at Flashback Weekends in 2008 in Chicago. \$40 well spent!

WHITNEY TAYLOR - OHIO

I WANTED TO THANK Mr. Alexander for his Note From Underground in RM#166 about the book *Outlaws of Western Canada*. The article was excellent in describing the book and bringing this piece of obscure Canadian culture to my attention. I recently was able to obtain my own copy at a local second-hand store and have only been able to put it down long enough to write this. Thank you. NATHANIEL KOLDOZIEA, VIA RUE-MORQUE.COM

I WANTED TO THANK YOU guys. I gave my two daughters your magazine about four years ago when they lost their mother, my wife, to breast cancer. Your magazine has been a focus that has helped keep their minds busy, and helped to build our bond. It is a ritual every time a new issue comes out that we read it and discuss articles and look for upcoming movies. I just wanted to say thanks for creating a good magazine, it has helped us more than you know.

FRANK, VIA RUE-MORQUE.COM

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EXPIRING MINDS...

OR RUE MORQUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE



What horror movie sound effect makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up like no other?

The sound of the arks in *Them!*

KYLE MURRAY

The metallic grinding sound during the opening corpse photography cemetery scene in the original *Yours Truly, Dr. T. S. Spool*.

DAN JACOBSON

The blood sounds in the *War of the Worlds* remake give me the heebie jeebies.

NICHAY MINWICK

The booming/banging sounds in *The Changeling*.

TIM CLEMAN

In episode 2 when Heather Matarazzo's character's flesh gets scraped and punctured by the Elizabeth (Bobby Nunez). The scene is far more disgusting to my ears than to my eyes!

NICHOL FINEAL

The banging on the walls in the original *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*.

CLARENCE MARK NUNES

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POST MORTEM
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Unreadlines



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS & HORROR HAPPENINGS

FANTASIA CELEBRATES TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY WITH DEL TORO, MIKE

Montreal's Fantasia International Film Festival is always a momentous event in the world of genre cinema, known for its high-energy audiences and breakout potential, a slot in Fantasia's lineup is one of the most coveted honours on the festival circuit. But 2016's event, kicking off on July 14 and running through August 2, could set a new high-water mark, as this year is Fantasia's twentieth anniversary, and the staff is celebrating with an eclectic lineup of premieres, repertory screenings and spotlights, as well as personal appearances by two of modern horror's most influential filmmakers.

"We always feel pressure to surpass what we've done before, but this it's almost an impossibility to consciously do that because we're always waiting for volume eleven on any given year," says Fantasia co-director Mitch Davis on celebrating the festival's two-decade milestone. "It's always about the hunt for incredible new discoveries, especially the legit cut-of-nowhere ones that are always the most exciting to celebrate, because you get to watch a filmmaker's life change in real time, literally in that period between their intro and their post-screening Q&A."

This year's festival will include the presentation of the prestigious Cheval Noir Award to Guillermo del Toro, who will make his first-ever Montreal appearance. The visionary Mexican filmmaker is also slated to host Fantasia's Canadian premiere at Gilles Pleno and Alexandre Pilon's movie-montage documentary *Creatures Designers: The Frankenstein Complex*.

Japanese iconoclast Takashi Miike will be on hand as well. Aside from accepting Fantasia's Lifetime Achievement Award, Miike will host the North American premiere of his own co-horror flick *Torre Tumbador* and a screening of the surreal playground bloodbath *As the Gods Bitch*.

"Miike has been a festival hero since our 1997 screening of *Pulp*, and so much of his work em-



bodies the spirit of filmmaking that Fantasia was created to share a spotlight on," Davis says. "And del Toro's cinema represents unrestrained imagination and a personal, poetic approach to genre."

Fantasia 2016 will share a spotlight as Polish genre cinema with screenings of the vampire-memoir musical *The Love, the Lie, the Lie*, the serial possession drama *Devil* and other recent titles, along with a new restoration of Andrzej Zulawski's 1988 masterpiece *On the Silver Globe*. This year's edition will also include the sixth annual Frontiers International Co-Production Market, which sees feature film projects in development from *Let Us Prey* director Brian O'Malley and Jerusalem directors Yoon and Garon Pao, as well as *Unholy Horror*, an eight-part documentary series on the greatest horror movies never made, created by Rob Marqu

Editor-in-Chief Drew Alexander

The red meat of Fantasia, though, is always the screenings of hot new genre titles from around the world. This year, Fantasia's lineup will include the world premiere of Secretary director Steven Shoenberg's *Apocalypse*, about a single mother's attempt to escape from the shadowy organization that has abducted her, and the Canadian premiere of Canadian director Krzysztof Kozlowski's *Hollowback* thriller *Density*.

As for under-the-radar titles that stand to emerge as festival highlights, Davis points to the American supernatural thriller *The Do On* and the Australian gothic *Red Christ*.

"I will blow away by *As the Gods Bitch*, one of the most original, successful and frightening supernatural horror movies I've seen since *Aberrant*," he explains. "I absolutely love this film, and I can't wait to see it with our audience. And *Christine* is a really neat oddity of a slasher film that sees an orphan [slayed] when a clinic is attacked by a fundamentalist fanatic returning home to his birth mother twenty years later on Christmas Day, now a talking and deformed necromancer with fundamentalist beliefs! It's absurd, it's gory, it stars Dee Wallace is one of the most driven performers of her career, and it ultimately manages to tackle a slew of serious topics in the midst of it all. It's Grand Guignol fantasy."

Other horror-centric highlights of the festival will include a 4K restoration screening of Dan Caswell's *Phantoms*, a special screening of David F. Sandberg's James Wan-produced *Lights Out*, the international premiere of Daniele Lynn Bousquet's *Abeloid*, and the Canadian premiere of Jim Hosking's *The Gruesy Stranger* and Richard Bates Jr.'s *Josh* Film.

For scheduling and ticket information, visit fantasiafestival.com

APRIL SNELLINGS



ART INSTALLATION RE-ENVISONS HITCHCOCK'S *PSYCHO* HOUSE



Photo: Art Project

Startlingly incongruous yet somehow familiar, a mansard-roofed, oil-blood-shingled Victorian house is currently sitting atop the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. It's a recreation of the torques Bates house took from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, but constructed out of recycled barn materials. The Met's fourth annual Ins and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden Commission (which runs until October 31), was envisioned by celebrated British artist Cornelia Parker, who titled the piece *Transitional Object (PsychoBarn)*. The psychoanalytic term "transitional object" describes those things (safety blankets, teddy bears, mementos, relics) that strongly fixate us as children, as adults, even as a society when we make difficult or traumatic transitions in life.

"I think of the PsychoBarn as a condensation of good and evil, both concepts fused in a single object," explains Parker. "The honey barn with its familiar red colour to the haunting black and white house on the hill in *Psycho* representing the dark side of the psyche. The Met becomes the hill."

The vivid red clapboards of PsychoBarn were reclaimed from an old barn in upstate New York. Though Parker's house is a mock-up, an illusion like Hitchcock's Hollywood set, its materials have a history, an authenticity: its redness

recalls for Parker iconic bucolic barns all over America whose redness have "old European antecedents" and were originally coloured with a modicum of dressed oil and animal blood. Such blood-tinted materials also recall the seemingly bucolic form of grave-robbing cannibal killer Ed Gein, the real-life inspiration for Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho* and subsequently Hitchcock's film.

"The original set was 2/3 size," she notes. "I tried to scale my PsychoBarn similarly. But it was more important to make sure it was the 'right' size for the perimeters of the roof and that it merged convincingly with the skyline. There were also limitations on the height of the structure due to the Museum's concern about wind loading."

Hitchcock modelled his iconic movie-mansion after artist Edward Hopper's *House By The Railroad* (1925), a painting on display nearby at the Museum of Modern Art. While Hopper depicted an old Victorian house looming behind train tracks, Hitchcock showed audiences a gothic dwelling overshadowing

the Bates Motel. Railroads, highways and motor lodges, like museums, represent progress, modernity, the dreams of reason. Parker, after Hopper and Hitchcock, interrogates modernity. Her art is intended to remind us of how progress represses fears and urges that, if unacknow-

ledged, rot as nightmares.

Once up on the museum's roof, visitors can approach the house. As Hitchcock said, "Even in daylight, this place looks a bit sinister," and Parker's homage is purposefully contrived to seem uncanny.

"I wanted to create a feeling of terror for the viewer, but also for it to be disorienting too," she says. "The warmth of the red clapboard invites you in, then the opaque windows and door with no doorknob does the opposite. The fact the building is just a facade, a construct, is revealed once you move around the roof... It is a building that offers you no interior, no shelter."

Similarly, the iconic house in the 1960 movie was a fake, consisting of only the front and one side, so it appeared as an entire house in the film, but in reality was just two facades propped up from behind and shot at a certain angle to create an illusion.

Musing how audiences might see Hitchcock's movie differently after viewing her art piece, Parker believes its colour might alter their perception of the film going forward.

"Perhaps they will experience it now in colour rather than black and white," she says. "People often swear the original film was in colour as they remember red blood dripping down the [shower drain], it was in fact grey-brown. People tried to remember the shower scenes and the dead mother in the cellar but little else about the film, but it is a highly conceptual construct."

CHRISTIAN SHEPARD



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SLAYER LAUNCHES COMIC BOOK, BMX LINE AND SUMMER TOUR

This summer of San Diego Comic-Con, things are going to get loud, as two titans of their respective industries are teaming up for the first time. Legendary metal band Slayer is joining forces with Dark Horse Comics, publisher of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Hellboy*, *B.P.R.D.* and many other horror titles for its first-ever comic book venture. While details of the creative team and storylines were still being kept under wraps at press time, the band is clearly psyched to be playing in the graphic novel field with its new publishing partner.

"This is the first time Slayer will officially release a comic book, and joining forces with Dark Horse is the best way to do it," Slayer co-founder and guitarist Kerry King tells *Ave Magazine*. "They have done an amazing job with *The Shield*, one of my favorite fucking TV shows. This means fans will no longer have to buy shitty boring comics of Comic-Con and you gotta thank Dark Horse for that!"

Along with their collaboration with that company, Slayer also announced that the group will be working with BMX brand Surma to create a series of bikes called the Guede To Grave collection. The four-set of two-wheelers will also



be on display at San Diego Comic-Con in July.

"My brother, my friends and I used to ride bikes in the early '70s," Slayer bassist/vocalist Tom Araya said in a press release. "We built a figure-eight track with ramps in my backyard where we would race and crash into each other. It was a precursor to BMX. We would go around the neighborhood to collect bikes that people had thrown away to salvage them, so it's cool to see Surma building a line of Slayer bikes."

Slayer's invasion of San Diego Comic-Con begins with an intimate sold-out concert for fans at the House of Blues on Thursday, July 21. The band will then take part in a series of signings onsite at Comic-Con on Friday, July 22. Slayer hits the road on a summer tour in August before returning to North America, where they'll headline a series of shows alongside Anthrax and Death Angel.

ANDY BURNS

ENTRAILS

First-time publisher Edge Press is turning Lucio Fulci's Italian ghoulishness classics into comic books. The first issue of *Lucio Fulci's Zombi*, featuring deluxe packaging, is now available and



expands upon the much sought-after, out-of-print original Zombi graphic novel, with subsequent issues to follow in the fall. A cover for Lucio Fulci's *Gate of Hell* has also been previewed, but no release date has been confirmed as of press time. *Zombi* can be ordered directly from edgepress.com.

Following months of speculation about an imminent sequel to *Beet-Black* that would see the return of Michael Keaton and Winona Ryder, director Tim Burton told Collider that he shouldn't expect the film anymore soon, saying "It's something that I really would like to do in the right circumstances, but it's not a kind of a movie that comes out [for a sequel]. It's not the Beetle-Jake trilogy."

While rising fans were left un-satisfied with Ridley Scott's *Alien* prequel *Prometheus*, it appears that film's sequel, *Alien: Covenant*, will ever reach closer to the original classic hatched 40 years in an interview with a Philippines newspaper, Sir Michael Fassbender said that the new movie would feature "great sets and ideas coming out of people." It's a fantastic mixture of high-end technology and primitive elements. The way that I can explain it is the same way that Ridley

did *Alien Resurrection*. *Alien: Covenant* will be in theaters August 4, 2017.

Kerley is reporting that the next film from Les Moon Trier (*The Kingdom*, *Antichrist*) will be an English-language serial killer story originally designed as a TV series, according to the report. *The House That Jack Built* is set in Washington and takes place over the span of ten years. The story will be told from the perspective of the serial killer and will begin shooting this August for a 2018 release.

After a successful six-episode tenth season that aired on the FXX Network this past winter, there was anticipation that *The X-Files* would return to the small screen for an eleventh season. However, in May, FXX chairman and CEO Sara Walker and Gary Newman stated that the series would miss the 2016-2017 television season. While stars David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson are interested in returning, their schedules aren't the same. *The X-Files* could air in the 2017-2018 season.

One prime show guaranteed a prime-time slot on FXX during the upcoming television season will be an adaptation of *The Exorcist*. Rather than following William Peter Blatty's 1973 novel or William Friedkin's 1974 adaptation, the series will focus on two new priests, played by Alfonso Herrera (*Sense8*) and Ben Daniels (*House of Cards*), taking on a case of demonic possession. George Clooney will co-star. Rupert Wyatt, who previously helmed *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, will direct. *The Exorcist* is set to air this fall.

ANDY BURNS

MONSTRO BIZARRO

The Loch Ness Monster has been found. Well, sort of... According to CNN, a survey team led by Kingsburg Maritime, Ltd. was conducting a detailed scan of the loch when it discovered a large, crocodile-shaped anomaly lying on the bottom. After some investigation, it was determined to be a sanken prop from the 1970 film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. In the movie, a submarine is disguised as a "sea serpent." The 30-foot (9.1m) creature prop sunk in the loch due to buoyancy problems. The loch has a depth of 745 feet (227m), easily within range of the navy team's astronomical vehicle, which explored naval wrecks. Kingsburg's Senior Subsea Applications Engineer, Craig Wallace, said, "The vehicle is providing insight to the loch's depths we never before imagined. Finding Nessie was, of course, an unexpected bonus!"

LYLE BLACKBURN

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CORONER'S REPORT

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A Michigan man was arrested after he admitted to spraying a toxic substance, made in part with mouse poison, onto the produce in roughly fifteen supermarkets across the state over a six-week period earlier this year.

One of the fourteen recently discovered new species of tarantulas in the US will be named after musician Johnny Cash. The *Aponasophia johnycashii*, or "Man in Black," was discovered in the area around Folsom State Prison in California. (Cash penned the famous song "Folsom Prison Blues.")

A worker at Disneyland Paris was found dead in the Phantom Manor haunted house in April. He was killed in an electrical accident while servicing the ride.

Samuel L. Jackson agreed to star in *Snakes on a Plane* based on the title alone, and when the studio made moves to change it, he insisted that they keep it as is.

In May, a San Francisco construction crew found a child's coffin beneath the garage they were renovating. Authorities believe the casket is about 129 years old and was left behind when the rest of the cemetery located on the site was moved back in the 1930s.

Walt Disney is alleged to have named Alfred Hitchcock from thinking at his trailer theme park because the director made "that disgusting movie *Psycho*."

A pair of British fishermen using bait partially composed of the ashes of their dead builds, in accordance with the man's final wishes, captured a 188-pound carp with it while fishing in Thailand.

In the early 1980s, screenwriter Nigel Kneave, creator of the *Quatermass* films and TV series, was hired by John Landis to write a remake of *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* intended for original Creature director Jack Arnold to direct.

As of 2012, some 30 million Facebook accounts belonged to users who had died at some point after registering for the online service.

Actress Gemma Arterton (*Bond* films) was born with six fingers on each hand.

The machete or "beach apple" tree, is also known as *la marconita de la muerte* in Spanish, which means "little apple of death." An apt name, given that the tropical tree is highly poisonous; it's even rumored to have killed famous explorer Juan Ponce de León.

Jack Daniel, the distiller behind the famous whiskey, is said to have died in 1911 from blood poisoning, the result of an infection contracted from kicking a safe at which he'd forgotten the combination.

A Washington man died earlier this year after he accidentally shot himself in the head while attempting to take a series of selfies with his girlfriend and his gun.

COMPILED BY NICHOLE E. KREMER
SEE A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO: coroner@ew.com

BODY HORROR

FEMALE CENSURE FROM HELLRAISER
ACTRESS: Lisa Banes (Oscar-nom) @lisanabanes

"I've always been inspired by women, so, for as long as I could remember, that's what I was trying to achieve when I pursued an art career. It's a movie hell so I agree to do a lot of naive portraits for people. It's a huge honor, but though, if it was up to me, that's all I'd do."

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2. STRANGELAND
CAPTAIN HOWDY'S SHARER STITCHES
3. THE COLLECTOR
CAPTIVE GIRL MADE MUTE
4. THE CRAZIES (2010)
NEEDLEPOINT PRACTISED ON A PRIEST
5. THE WITCH
CALLED CAMELS A CRAB APPLE
6. SAW IV
SEE NO EVIL, SPEAK NO EVIL — JIGSAW STYLE



TORTURED TAGLINE

AFTER MIDNIGHT (2009)

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FINAL WORDS



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2 THE SHINING CARPET PATTERN TIE BY JOHNNIEBLODOWTIE \$44.00

All shirt and tie so he makes Jack a hell boy. That's why you need JohnnieBlodowie's medium-weight specialty cotton tie with the classic Overlook Hotel carpet pattern from *The Shining*. It's 55" long and 3" across at its widest point, making it ideal for your next job interview at a cursed hotel.



3 MONSTER HAND TOWEL SET BY SOURPUSS \$16

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All prices in USD unless otherwise indicated. Items available at Rue-Morgue.com until July 21, 2016 only.

CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

MATCHBOX CHARACTER CARS (Matchbox Inc., 1998-2008)

Matchbox — maker of Barbie and Hot Wheels — made a rare leap into horror territory when it released several gargoyle-themed die-cast vehicles as part of its Matchbox Character Car Collection. The toys feature stylized vinyl figurines of killers Jason Voorhees, Freddy Krueger and Leatherface, as well as classic Universal creepies the Wolf Man and Frank-

enstein's Monster perched atop cars, in the case of Frankie, standing behind miniature trucks, a jeep and a van. The toys range from \$15 to \$25 on eBay, with the rarer Leatherface vehicle going for roughly double that amount.

JAMES HUNNELL

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BEFORE *Session 9* PREMIERES ON BLU-RAY NEXT MONTH, DIRECTOR BRAD ANDERSON TAKES US BACK BEHIND THE PEELING WALLS OF THE INFAMOUS DANVERS STATE MENTAL HOSPITAL WHERE ITS HORRORS UNFOLDED

I Live in the Weak and the Wounded

MICHAEL DOYLE

THE SWISS PSYCHIATRIST AND PSYCHOANALYST CARL JUNG WROTE IN 1938: "EVERYONE CARRIES A SHADOW, AND THE LESS IT IS EMBODIED IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S CONSCIOUS LIFE, THE BLACKER AND DENSER IT IS." Jung's belief that each of us has a dark side (or unconscious "shadow aspect") of our personality that the conscious ego does not identify in itself is by no means a revolutionary idea in horror cinema. Classics such as *Carrie*, *Psycho*, *Repulsion*, *The Tenant*, and *The Shining* all evoke the latent turmoil of their disturbed protagonists as a means of disconcerting the viewer. Each reveals the latent fears and emotional vulnerabilities that lay buried within the calligous recesses of the human psyche, where the monsters often exist in (and emerge from) the subconscious rather than as external

threats that dwell in the physical world.

Few contemporary teen films exhibit the same brooding mastery of psychological horror as these "horror-based masterworks," but one that deftly traffics in their influence is *Session 9* (out August 16 from Screen Factory). Brad Anderson's towering portrait of middle-age angst and gun-running madness. Scripted under the title *The Abbie After* (a term the writer/director often heard relating to dissociative identity disorder), the movie took most critics by surprise on its release in 2001 as his previous efforts had been the indie role-coms *Next Step* (1996) and *Happy Accidents* (1999). After the collapse of Anderson's proposed remake of the French comedy *When the Girl's Away*, at Miramax he and his co-writer, Stephen Gevedon, decided to make a character-driven horror film that rejected the fiscal, self-referential tenets of Scorsese and its sundry imitators.

Their story centres on an abatement crew bidding to remove asbestos from a derelict insane asylum that closed 150 years earlier following a satanic sludge scandal. Bled by financial worries and the stresses of recent fatherhood, Gordon Fleming (Peter Mulan) secures the contract by promising that his five-man company can complete the massive job in a week. The crew consists of Phil (David Geras), Gordon's best friend, who is struggling with the departure of his girlfriend and a secret predilection for marijuana; Mike (Jo-Jo-Wilder Seiverd), an introverted low school dropout bored with menial manual work; Hank (Josh Lacey), a semi-time loser with big dreams who is currently in a relationship with Phil's ex; and Jeff (Gerrard Sanon, 46), Gordon's multi-headed nephew who suffers from syncope (faint of the dark).

As the men begin clearing the hazardous materials from the enormous but-shaped building, Mike wanders into an abandoned office and discovers nine dusty reel-to-reel videotapes stored inside. The recordings contain a series of hypnotherapy sessions a psychiatrist once conducted with a madwoman named Mary Habber who was afflicted with multiple personality disorder. As Mike plays the tapes and gradually learns of the woman's disturbing history, the surviving tensions, private fears and personal demons of the men begin to surface. When one of the cleanup crew mysteriously disappears, Gordon and Phil begin to suspect one another of sabotaging the job, but is a malevolent presence lurking somewhere within the labyrinthine asylum?

One of the best films to be shot on 24P high-definition video and transferred to 35mm, *Session 9* was filmed at the legendary Dumas State Mental Hospital in Massachusetts that in the 19th century and partially demolished in 2006 (planned, it's now the site of plush condominiums), the ominous structure was rumored to be the institution where prefrontal lobotomy was controversially "perfected" on its hapless inmates. For many years a place of pilgrimage for writers and artists, Dumas is said to have inspired H.P. Lovecraft to create the Arkham sanatorium in his classic short story "The Thing on the Doorstep."

Despite drawing mixed positive notices, *Session 9* was an undeserved failure, scraping a meagre \$375,000 in its first two months of release (a recent *Anderson* gleefully attributes to USA Films' general "intolerance and confusion" over how to sell the movie to audiences). A solemn work of rare intelligence and raw emotional intensity, it now stands as one of the most disturbing, atmospheric and finely crafted post-millennial horror films.

To commemorate its 15th anniversary, the *Morgue* asked *Anderson* (who is currently developing a six-part horror anthology series for Amazon) to delve into the dark recesses of his memory and examine *Session 9*. He warned, if you haven't seen the movie, spoilers lay ahead.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU AND STEPHEN DEVEDON TO WRITE *SESSION 9*?

It was several things, actually. I had lived in Boston for a number of years and on the drive north out of the city, you'd pass this hill. On top of that hill loomed



Seeking Asylum: Phil (David Geras) in an underground passageway, and (opposite) the Dumas State Mental Hospital where the film was shot

this horrific abandoned asylum that was the Dumas State Hospital. It had stood there since 1827 and only closed down in the 1980s after Ronald Reagan decided to basically de-institutionalise everyone in the United States. Every time I drove out of Boston I would gaze up at this enormous, haunted palace and imagine what a great location it would make for a movie. Steve and I took this incredible building as our launching point, but we still needed to find something to write about. Naturally, the first thing to do was visit Dumas itself. So, we went online and found a couple of kids who called themselves "urban explorers." They would go on these spelunking missions and investigate abandoned mental sites, deserted subways, empty prisons, places like that. We discovered that these guys had been to Dumas previously, so we called them up and asked them to take us on a tour of it.

WHAT DO YOU RECALL OF THAT MAJEW VISIT TO DUMAS?

It was very spooky! The area was strictly off-limits and nobody was allowed to go in there as the state had condemned the building due to the dangerously high levels of asbestos. The authorities had erected fences all around Dumas to keep out kids who were breaking in and vandalising the place. One weekend, we met up with the urban explorers, climbed over the fences, and snuck inside to look around. We spent the entire day exploring going through the deserted patients' wings, searching the eerie tunnels, and visiting the old hospital on campus. We accidentally creased each other out, but gathered all the little material for a screenplay. When we came back to New York, Steve and I started jamming on a story that would take place entirely at Dumas—we wanted

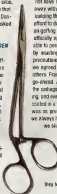
to shoot at one location because we knew that if we were going to do the film, it would have to be done economically. By utilising Dumas, we'd already have a built-in set and wouldn't have to construct anything. All the rooms, hallways and corridors would become our sets, saving a lot of money. So, the script was precisely tailored to that location with specific parts of Dumas in mind.

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IF YOU'D BEEN UNABLE TO SECURE PERMISSION TO SHOOT AT THE HOSPITAL?

Dumas ran the movie. Without it, we could not have made *Session 9*. We may have gotten away with shooting the interiors there and then building the interiors elsewhere, but we couldn't afford to do that. We were completely dependent on getting access to that building. When we first officially approached the authorities, we were able to persuade them to let us shoot at Dumas by insisting that we'd follow the proper safety precautions. It wasn't a safe environment, so we agreed to shoot in certain places and avoid others. Frankly, I was surprised they gave us the go-ahead. Aside from the presence of asbestos, the ceilings were falling, the floors were collapsing, and everything was littered with dead birds or coated in a thick layer of dust and grime. Dumas was as precarious as it looked in the movie, so we always had to be cognizant of where and how we shot.

EXACTLY HOW MANY OF THE INTERIOR SEQUENCES WERE FILMED AT DUMAS, AND HOW MANY OF THEM WERE RECREATED SETS?

When Dumas was abandoned they left a lot of it as it was. That meant that





INSIDE EUROPE'S OLDEST FORMER ASYLUM
IS A MUSEUM DEDICATED TO DISEASE,
DEFORMITY AND THE DISTURBING
HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Frayed Ends of Sanity

by DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ
Editor by ALEKSANDRA INIC-KANADA

EVERYTHING ABOUT NARRENTURN OZZES SPOOKINESS. It is Austria's Federal Pathologic-Anatomical Museum—a.k.a. a museum of diseases, deformities, medical oddities and other aberrations from Mother Nature's common standards. Built in 1784 at the request of Emperor Josef II, its name means "Tower of Fools" because it used to be Vienna's first psychiatric hospital and continental Europe's oldest building for the accommodation of mental patients.

The circular, fortress-like five-storey building is comprised of 139 rooms, which now showcase the museum's contents, including casts of body parts affected by various diseases, deformed skeletons of every age, numerous terata (i.e. malformed fetuses with delicate, redundant, misplaced, or mismatched parts, preserved in jars) and more.

None of it is presented for the sake of exploitation or sensationalism: after all, this is not a freak show but a dignified institution under the auspices

of the University of Vienna, and its main purpose is educational. That's why it is only open to the public three days a week for three hours at a time (visit narrenturn.at for museum hours). The effort to visit is certainly worthwhile, though.

I visit on a Saturday morning, standing in front of the spooky greyish building, I try to imagine the kinetic cacophony that emanated from within these walls 200 years ago. I savour its obvious age and the fact that it was not restored to the pristine look of the other buildings on the campus. Oddly, the outside of the first storey is covered in smooth plaster. A guide tells my travelling companion and I that in the building's madhouse days, locals would climb the walls in order to reach the upper windows and throw cabbages and other stuff at the chained inmates. It was, apparently, a popular form of entertainment in its day.

We enter the interior yard of Narrenturn, which looks like something out of a movie. Peeling walls, vintage windows and an overall gloomy decay



Cabinets And Displays (left to right): vintage asylum medical equipment, educational skulls and phrenology equipment and (top) the circular interior of the 232-year-old Narrenturn

perfectly set the scene and prepares us for the building's mood.

Of the five floors, only the first two are open to the public. Items on the ground floor require no guide, as they are accompanied by inscriptions and graphs (though mostly in German). Among the exhibits is a recreation of an old pharmacy complete with vintage bottles, glass cases with life-size depictions of anomalous births, busts and skulls illustrating the debates of phrenology, a red marble dissection table, and a recreation of the ancient morgue (with a "body" under a sheet). On the wider side, there's a room populated by red velvet curtains, ancient loaves, candlesticks, ladder-armed animals, skulls, herbs, and strange artwork. Meant to depict various superstitions of the late 16th century, it reminds me partly of the Voodoo Museum in New Orleans and partly of a psychotic magician's room from some Hammer film.

Amongst the display items are medical tools that put Conanberg's instruments for operating on mutant women in *Dead Ringers* to shame. And skulls... skulls everywhere. Most of them look as if they were eaten by acid but actually belonged to people born with severe bone deformities. The walls here are lined with casts made of faces and genitalia eaten by various (mostly venereal) diseases—in full 3-D, and in hard colour, detailing their punky, bubbly, scaly horrors.

The creepy highlight of this floor, however, is the hideously deformed pale fetus, which seems to be trying to split in two. It's a thing of fascinating ugliness—so inexpressive for this reality, yet also gorgeously reminiscent of H.R. Giger's paintings. It's no wonder that Giger, as I'm told, used to come here from nearby Switzerland, seeking inspiration for his *Helioscopus*.

On the second floor we find a memorable model depicting the cancerous New Flesh of a brain tumour protruding through an eye socket like so much pusidge, and many similar sights. That said, the bulk of the upper level is devoted to bones, skulls and entire skeletons in varying degrees of obscenity. They hint at shapes too hideous to contemplate, and remind me of a Lovecraft quote from "The Festival": "...things have learnt to walk that ought to crawl."

As for the remaining floors, they're closed to the public; I've heard rumours that they house gins with creatures and things too horrible to be publicly shown. Who knows—after the ones we were allowed to see, perhaps it's for the best they remain hidden from the public. If your stomach and imagination are strong, the first two floors of *Nemesis* should satisfy your curiosity for the historically horrific. **B**

some rooms were already crowded when we got there. We did visit the auction room where Gordon discovers that disturbing collage of images, but it was directly inspired by what we'd found there. We discovered areas containing boxes of patents' files and audiotapes, and rooms where the minutes had plastered weird images and scrawled strange stuff on the walls. We actually used some of these things, but we also took some liberties and added other details here and there to make it even weirder and spookier... The room where Mike finds Harry Hobbes' vestra tapes, we dressed up that stuff, but a lot of the props, the strange objects and things were already there. We brought in virtually nothing. For instance, the scene where Gordon is sitting on a tree near a pauper's graveyard—that was a real-creativity life just added the markers that we needed to see in the shot, but people were indeed buried there. It still amazes me that we were able to incorporate aspects of reality into a fictional story.

HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF GORDON?

Gordon was inspired by a true story that occurred in Boston in the mid-1930s. There was this guy [named Richard Bassett] who worked in the insurance industry. He was a normal nine-to-five who'd go home to his wife in the suburbs every day. One evening after she'd burned his hand on the stove, he inexplicably strangled her before cutting out her heart and lungs, and hanging them as a stake in the backyard. He then experienced a complete break in his psyche and, for the rest of the week, continued to get up each morning, take a shower, and go to work in this isolated body by rotting in an upstairs bedroom. He was eventually caught but had no memory of what he had done. The whole notion of a guy who'd committed this horrendous crime and had somehow—consciously or subconsciously—sublimated the terrible reality of it and maintained a normal existence, was fascinating to us. That case provided the parallels for Gordon: a seemingly good husband and father, heroically struggling to make ends meet, who is ultimately revealed to be a monster.

ACCLAIMED SCOTTISH ACTOR AND DIRECTOR PETER MALLAN WAS A LEFT FIELD CHANCE FOR THE PART. HOW DID HE BECOME INVOLVED?

You often have an actor in mind for a role, but either they can't or won't do the film, or they cost too much. In the original iteration of the script, Gordon was still a working class guy with a family. He was Boston born and bred. We were initially looking for an American actor who wasn't a mature, old—somebody new with calluses on his hands, who was also physically imposing, so we saw Gordon as this gentle giant. So we first approached John C. Reilly, but he wasn't available. We then talked to Vincent D'Onofrio, where I'd worked with on a previous movie, but he didn't pan out either. It was the same when casting the role of Phil, originally Paul Giamatti was playing Phil, but a scheduling conflict meant Giamatti had to depart so we then hired David Cross a week before shooting started. Anyway, I'd seen Peter Mullan in *My Name is Joe* and was struck by his performance as this fucked-up alcoholic who was still charismatic and sympathetic. Peter was physically similar then Reilly and D'Onofrio, and told me right away that he didn't want to play Gordon with an American accent. So we hired Gordon into this guy who'd come over to the States from Scotland in search of work. That gave the story a more sad and tragic quality.

NEW SD?

Well, in making Gordon an immigrant, he now becomes a guy who was sort of pursuing the American Dream. It's like the American Success Story in its most simplistic form. It's all about rugged individualism and self-reliance, making your success your own way and building that house in the suburbs with the wife, the kids and the nice car. It's a very middle class aspiration, this idea of someone who's come from a less fortunate background and risen above it. Gordon has arrived from Scotland to make good, and Boston is teeming with construction workers from Ireland and Scotland who've come over to make their careers and fulfil the American Dream. But the stress that accompanies the desire to acquire these material things can sour the dream.



Madhouse Madlings: Actor (Stephen Gaudin) explores an office in the concept album.



Tricks Of The Trade: A bloody scene of amnesia, just (top) Mike shows Jeff (Brandon Sienko) how lobotomies were once performed

Choosing the perfect house and family can be a step too far and potentially send some men tapping into madness. The idea that we can change who we are isn't always the case. Maybe we see who we are for a reason.

YOU'VE SPOKEN OF THE DANGERS GARDNER OFFERED PHYSICALLY, BUT WHAT ABOUT PSYCHICALLY? DID THE LOCATION ITSELF HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THE ACTORS?

I think it did affect some people, particularly Peter. He would actually put his ear against the walls as if to summon the spirit of that place. Deavers was a cool location to be, but it was very bleak. I would describe it as this vast cathedral of pain. Many lives had come to miserable and tragic ends within these walls and it had this tangible aura of sadness and despair. If you were a remotely sensitive person, you could easily pick up on that atmosphere. So, it was not difficult to get totally apoplectic. We were sometimes shooting in there at night and even back when we were initially scouting the location, we would venture back in the hours of darkness just to see what it looked like. We'd wander the hallways at night, which was particularly creepy. I know that some people did see weird things there, but I saw nothing. I'm somewhat of a misanthrope and my boss at Deavers was all about getting the movie done. But there definitely was a strange vibe at that place that somehow lived with you.

WAS A SLOW-BURNING, CHARACTER-DRIVEN HORROR FILM AT ALL FASHIONABLE AT THE TIME YOU WERE MAKING SESSION 9?

No, it was decidedly unfashionable. The horror movies that were all the rage back then were campy teen flicks like *Grease* and *I Know What You Did Last Summer*. Steve and I wanted to get back to a more genuinely serious and suspenseful kind of horror film that would really wrattle the audience again — like the kind of unsavory psychological horror movies made by Roman Polanski. Our intent was always to make a film that sustained an ominous tone that got under your skin, rather than something that had people leaping out of their seats every few minutes. We wanted to discomfort and disturb the audience, not bombard them with stupid jump-scares.

WHAT ABOUT THE HAIR-RAISING MOMENT WHEN NANK RETURNS TO THE DERELICT ASYLUM ALONE AT NIGHT TO RETRIEVE SOME LOOT AND ENCOUNTERS A DARK FIGURE IN A CORRIDOR?

Well, that's probably the only moment in *Session 9* that really makes you jump. Other than that scene, I think the key word I'd use to articulate our whole approach is "dread." It would have been easy to make a movie about a bunch of teenagers who break into the asylum and — through the course of the night — end up in some horrific way. Those were the very movies, with their depressing parade of clichés and wretched characters that Steve and I were reacting against. We wanted to make a horror movie for adults. Hence, *Session 9* is about a middle-aged, blue-collar family man who isn't interested in just getting laid. Gordon has more pressing issues to deal with.

AN UNWORTHY EXCHANGE OCCURS WHEN JEFF READS OUT AN ASYLUM REGISTER AND LEARNS THAT PEOPLE WERE ONCE INSTITUTIONALIZED FOR SUCH COMPLAINTS AS "MANTYPED PRIDE" AND "DISAPPOINTED EXPECTATIONS." WAS THAT INDICED TRUTH?

Yeah, that's all stuff we discovered during our research. A lot of the nonsense people were committed back at the turn of the century were due to problems that today we'd call clinical depression or OCD. Back then, they had their own terms for these things. Whatever "mottled pride" actually meant, I don't know, but I remember we found an antiquated compressed form in *Gleaners* that listed a series of psychological complaints that the doctor would tick off as each new patient was admitted. It was fascinating to learn how mental illness was once diagnosed and treated. We found mucky boxes of patients' personal files that were still stored at the building — some dating back to 1900.

They contained photos of patients and ink-written doctor's notes and it was all just sitting there! I was amazed these documents hadn't been removed and properly archived. Of course, the "disappointed expectations" those patients once hit also relates to Gordon and his inability to achieve the American Dream.

SEVERAL OF YOUR FILMS, INCLUDING SESSION 9, THE MACHINIST, YOUR MASTERS OF HORROR ENTRY "SOUNDS LIKE," AND "SPOOKED," YOUR EPISODE OF FEAR ITSELF, ELICIT A PROTAGONIST'S FRACTURED POINT OF VIEW AND THAT PERSON'S SENSE OF ISOLATION AND DESPAIR. DO YOU IN ANY WAY IDENTIFY WITH THOSE EMOTIONS THAT FREQUENTLY OCCUR IN YOUR MOVIES?

I'm not as morose and dark as some of the characters in my films, but I identify with the white male angst that afflicts us when we reach a certain age. I've always been interested in stories about people who appear normal but have a hidden dark side to them. I'm fascinated by the notion of discovering some horrific truth about yourself that you've buried — only now it's clawing its way to the surface. My protagonists often learn that the monster is not on the outside, it's on the inside. It's terrifying to think there might be a monstrous aspect to us that we've concealed. Like Ron Gordon, and Christian Bole's character in *The Machinist*, wonder why they feel so haunted and seek a revelation. They believe the answer lies externally with other people, when in fact they have constructed their own self-perpetuating reality. In my movies, there really is no external threat. You are the threat. You just don't realize it yet.

SESSION 9 DEALS WITH THE DESTRUCTIVE PRESSURES OF FAMILY LIFE AND THE MADDENING DISORIENTATION OF ENDORING MIDDLE-AGE WERE THOSE THINGS YOU FEARED?

Now that I'm a parent myself, the full horror of what Gordon does is hard for me to comprehend. I think he hits good.

IN Session 9, THE VOICE IN THE MACHINE IS THE MOST MALEVOLENT CHARACTER OF ALL

"Do It, Gordon!"

by ANDREA BUTLER

FOUND FOOTAGE STYLE FILMS HAVE COME TO DOMINATE CONTEMPORARY HORROR CINEMA. The use of found reels and tapes has become a

common storytelling trope, but it's not related to visual media. The representation of sound recording equipment and the analogue tapes it produces has been just as popular in supernatural horror films, where they help characters communicate with the dead. *Session 9*, however, is unique in that the found tapes inform the audience, not the characters, of key connections in the narrative.

While Gordon Fleming (Peter Mullart) and his crew by not to lose their heads in the asbestos-riddled asylum, crew member Mike (Stephen Gervais) stumbles upon the tape-recorded sessions of former patient Mary Hobbes (voiced by Junia Hughes). The unsettling audio that follows is chilling, as we are introduced to Mary's three alternate personalities who recount events of the evening Mary killed her family. While Mike is manically manipulating the machine, he quickly becomes obsessed, obeying uncomprehending urges to escape to a secluded office where he can listen to the tapes in isolation. That said, none of Gordon's crew, including Mike, are aware of the danger they're in, or of the film's final reveal. Only the audience has sufficient knowledge to make the connection between Mary and Gordon's parallel narratives of violence and repression.

One way the film accomplishes this task is that the tape-recorded sessions are always linked to Gordon visually, more specifically in relation to Mary's alternate personality, Simon. Simon is the alter ego who killed Mary's family, just as it's Simon who helps Gordon commit the same act.

Simon doesn't speak on the tapes until the end of the film, but with each mention of his name there's always a cut away to Gordon, usually through a dissolve, which blends past and

present visually as well as aurally. On one of the first tapes the doctor asks Mary's alter ego Billy to "wake up Simon," which is visually accompanied with a dissolve cut to Gordon working. Gordon is just as "waking" as Simon at this point.

Additionally, even when there's no equipment in use, Simon speaks to Gordon, introducing himself ("Hello, Gordon") and prompting Gordon to act ("Do it, Gordon!"). We may not see a tape recorder, but we know the voice is connected to the tapes because the whirr of the machine always anticipates this voice, heightening suspense. Interestingly, during Simon's confession of Mary's crime, a second track can be heard of Simon saying the same things to Mary, strengthening the link between the two *à la* linked characters through audio.

The first time that Simon speaks on the tapes, he confesses to the murders. As he recounts the gory details, the audience is presented with images of Gordon making his way through the hospital, looking for the crewmember he unknowingly lobotomized in an instance when "Simon" took over. Gordon's parallel narrative is fully revealed to the audience during the final taped session. The soundtrack for Gordon's fatal attack on his family and crew is heard alongside Simon's confession on the tapes. The audience doesn't see the murders (although we do see some of their effects); Simon's confession paired with the rural flashback of Gordon's murder spree is presented to the audience almost entirely through audio.

Unlike horror films that incorporate sound recording equipment into the plot, the tapes in *Session 9* do nothing to help prevent Gordon from murdering his family or crew, or to warn Mike of the danger he faces. Instead, they create an uncanny space where past and present merge. A dead patient communicates to the audience what they would otherwise not know without explicit exposition, which heightens the suspenseful atmosphere, filling viewers with growing dread. *Session 9* stands as an original example of how sound recording equipment can become a character in itself, presenting the audience with more knowledge than it allows its own players, resulting in one of the most psychologically terrifying filmic descents into madness of the 21st century. **D**



Scissors And Liam Neeson (Liam Neeson) makes a discovery in the wild, and **Scissors** (Sean Penn) makes a break outside the asylum.

intentions in wanting to provide for his family but the stress of his job, coupled with the demands of fatherhood, is making him vulnerable. We all have moments where we feel overwhelmed by our career, our relationships, or some other event or responsibility, and that pressure can make us momentarily lose our minds. That's a typical Stephen King trope: the guy who succumbs to the stress of whatever it is he's doing — like Jack Nicholson's character in *The Shogun*. I find that idea interesting as maybe that same darkness resides in each of us. Maybe it can be unleashed under the right circumstances. The idea in *Season 9* is that whatever has happened in that building was enough to infect Gordon and invoke the darkness within him. The asylum isn't possessed by something; it's merely a catalyst that creates the atmosphere for a man to suddenly learn he is a monster. His vulnerability has made him susceptible to it and the final line of the movie is very telling: "I live in the weak and the wounded."

THE FILM BENEFITS FROM ITS REMARKABLY KICK SOUND DESIGN AND UNUSUAL SCORE, BOTH OF WHICH CONVEY A PALPABLE SENSE OF ISOLATION AND ONSET.

To me, sound is crucial as a means of not only telling the story but driving it. I don't think people fully appreciate the transformative power of imaginative sound design. *Season 9* is, as you said, a film in which sound transcends so much. I spent a lot of time thinking about how and when to use sound. The tapes Mike plays act as a sort of voice-over. It doesn't comment directly on the action but contextualizes the film with an ominous feeling. The hissing, warbling catheters of Mary Hobbes' voice were designed to disquiet the viewer. We also had a warbling bird-song play each time Gordon spaces

out. It's the sound of morning-time which I found to be haunting and melancholy. I thought it was far more interesting to associate a sound with Gordon's madness than a musical cue. The sound collage at the end of the movie — where we don't see the horror, we hear it — was a risky thing to do. But it's more affecting because it demands the audience use their imaginations.

AND THE SCORE?

Music to me is an equally critical component and I very much wanted a non-traditional score for *Season 9*. An experimental band called Clinicx Golden Twelve, who were friends of Steve's, created these creepy soundscapes. They didn't even score the film in a conventional way. They simply gave me a ton of weird music cues and, when I was editing the movie, I put them in various places where I felt they worked, replacing them occasionally. I wanted to find a way to have the sound design and the music play off each other because they are not separate things. There is just enough sound design in the score as there is music in the sound design.

MARY, DURING POST-PRODUCTION, DID YOU ELIMINATE AN ENTIRE SCRIPT INVOLVING A FORMER FEMALE MENTAL PATIENT NAMING THE FACILITY?

That decision was made after some screenings we held. Certain people were confused that the woman was Mary Hobbes — even though she was black and Hobbes was white. As it says in the film, a lot of ex-patients did return to Benvers after it was closed down. The woman was meant to be a red herring

that we could use to build some creepy moments and point-of-view shots where you weren't sure who was watching who. Her basic function was to misdirect the viewer and make them think that she was responsible for all the bad shit that was happening. It would have been great to have kept some of that stuff, but it was difficult to sustain. So, we lost it.

AFTER FINISHING SESSION 8 AND LOOKING AT THE FILM, DID YOU FEEL IT HAD ACHIEVED ALL YOUR OBJECTIVES AND, IF SO, DO YOU STILL FEEL THAT WAY ABOUT IT?

That's a difficult question. You always have an initial vision of a film in your mind but then, after it's completed, it's never quite as you imagined it. Time, money, the demands of the location, actors bringing their own interpretations, all those things come into play. Ultimately, you have to look at the finished film and consider it on its own terms. You ask yourself, "How close did I get to what I'd envisioned?" That's a rather pointless exercise in the movie always stands for itself no matter what. I mean, the audience doesn't care how hard the film was to make and why should they? *Season 9* has gained a following over the years and it's a movie people always want to know more about. I was — and still am — very happy with it. It achieved all my objectives, particularly its tonality of skin-crawling dread which almost seems to emanate beyond itself. I wanted *Season 9* to arouse a very specific response in people and it often does. It makes you feel as if watching it is like picking at a painful scab. It hurts, and it doesn't quite make sense, but you do it anyhow. 



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At Home With Monsters, Guillermo del Toro's first museum retrospective, premieres this month in Los Angeles with over 500 items representing the scope of the filmmaker's dark obsessions

BEYOND THE WALLS of BLEAK

by Dave Alexander



We've all wondered what it would be like to get inside the heads of our favorite artists to see what makes them tick—to discover what desires, fears and obsessions drive them to create. With the July 27 opening of the *Guillermo del Toro: At Home with Monsters* exhibit at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), fans of the filmmaker can practically party in his gray matter with an exhaustive exhibit consisting of over 500 objects, divided into seven themes, which are taken chiefly from del Toro's personal collection housed at his California-based workspace/private museum: Black House. Also on display are pages from his notebooks, 68 related items from the gallery's permanent collection and some pieces selected specifically for the show. Items shown include various types of illustrations, costumes, paintings, sculptures, books, photos, maquettes, artistic artifacts, kinetic elements and additres.

Despite his hectic schedule (del Toro is currently in pre-production on his next feature, *The Shape of Water*, a "supernatural romance"), he has been very hands-on with putting together the show, working with the team from LACMA, headed up by Brit Salvesen (see interview on p. 25), curator and head of the Prints and Drawings department of the museum. He will also contribute to *At Home with Monsters'* accompanying 144-page exhibition catalogue (edited by Salvesen), which delves further into his unique aesthetic.

While some filmmakers are reclusive about their process, del Toro has always been very open about it, hosting video tours of Black House, lecturing on his influences and releasing the 2013 book *Guillermo del Toro: Creator of Monsters: My Notebooks, Collections, and Other Obsessions*.

"Honestly, I'm reacting to what made me happy as a kid," he replies when asked why *At Home with Monsters* is important to him. "When I was fifteen, thirteen, and I would read about a filmmaker, be it Hitchcock talking to Truffaut or an interview with Brian De Palma or an interview with George Miller, I loved when they were discussing the craft and when they were open about their process. And as a young man, when I started listening to commentary tracks on the Criterion laserdiscs, it was so great to hear filmmakers discuss the day-to-day, and since then I've been doing the same. I run a pretty open shop about my process."

The idea for the show was born after LACMA screened some of del Toro's films and he invited some of the staff to visit Black House. He recalls that about halfway through the tour they suggested an exhibition connecting his process to his designs and the items he's assembled to for

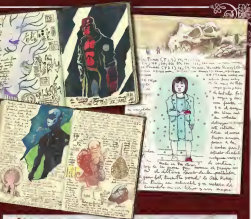
his own creatively stimulating environment.

"It's a huge, huge collection of art that I love, which influences me and is beautiful. [LACMA] was attracted to that plus the sculptures, the artifacts. I think it's really a stimulating place, Black House. They sort of wanted to make it a study about my process. And that's how the ball got rolling."

As the show's title suggests, to understand *At Home with Monsters* one has to understand the function of Black House and its contents. Del Toro regards it as a sacred space.

"It's where I literally recharge my batteries. I feel a change in my energy, and it's incredible and inspiring for me, so objects are not there as a collection, they are almost like talismans, they are relics. [They are] holy relics the way that Catholics have an image of Saint Joseph or Saint Peter or whoever they worship—that's the value of these things for me. I have a Saint Gilleman from *Creature from the Black Lagoon* or Saint Dick Smith or Saint Dr. Prentiss—images of characters that are a part of my inventory of saints. When people say I am a collector, I feel as if collectors are obsessed with the object, of its value, specifically in the market of collecting. I don't give a shit about any of that! If I buy a toy, I take it out, I play with it, I put it on the shelf to look at, it isn't hidden. No piece of my collection is hidden from view. Everything is on display... [because] it's an expression of myself."

The beginnings of that self is encapsulated



Worldbuilder's Handbook: Pages from del Toro's sketchbooks depicting conceptual art from films such as *Melancholia* and *Pacific Rim*, and (opposite) the foyer of the filmmaker's Black House

Guillermo del Toro



by the "Childhood and Innocence" section of the show. It's designed to spotlight the role of children in del Toro's work; they are central to his films *Cronos*, *Mimic*, *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*. This section will include a life-size effigy of Sarah, the child-ghost from *The Devil's Backbone*, storyboards from both that film and *Pan's Labyrinth*, as well as the red shoes worn by the little girl in *Pacific Rim*.

In addition, says del Toro, there will be a large number of illustrations from fairy-tale books by illustrators such as Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Edward Gorey. As well, there will be the first book he





purchased with his own money; a horror anthology curated by legendary *Famous Monsters of Filmland* editor Forrest J Ackerman (a long-time admirer, del Toro stole of Ackerman's 2009 memorial service).

"It was called *The Greatest Horror Stories*; they were not actually the greatest horror stories," says del Toro, chuckling. "Most of them were pretty bad."

The show's most personal items, however, are a couple of his toys from his childhood in Guadalajara, Mexico.

"We're going to have my first toy and the second toy, which I made when I was a very, very young kid," he says. "My first toy is a stuffed soldier, but the toy you're going to see that is popular is one I made when I was about seven, and it's a werewolf. ... I made it because my grandmother used to go out to a store that sold arts and crafts [supplies] and they sold black eyes and little snouts so that you could make stuffed dolls. Snouts, hands and there was a wolf snout, and they sold fake fur. So I bought a couple of yards of fake fur, a couple of eyes, a wolf's snout; I cut the fur, I got the best of a toy [called an] Oily Jiggler - you hung them on your rearview mirror. And out of those, I made the best of the werewolf. It's really quite a cunning little thing but it has value to me."

The next section of *All Haze with Monsters* goes much further back into history. Called *Victoriana*, it references the Victorian Age, as well as the Romantic and Edwardian Ages. Del Toro named *Black House*



Monsters And Monsters: Del Toro with statues of Roy Hatterhouse and Oliver Reed's werewolf in The Curse of the Werewolf, and (top) a room dedicated to H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe

after "quintessential Victorian writer" Charles Dickens' story of the same name, so far has there's a particular resonance in the era. *Victoriana* will have a subsection spotlight on the author, but will also encapsulate Dickensian themes intrinsic to del Toro's work such as the blending of realism and fantasy, intricate plot twists and an interest in technology and cityscapes. In addition, there will be Victorian heirlooms, wax sculptures from the 19th century and functioning automata.

Of particular note, however, is the presence of

insects, which were popular to study, draw and collect during the time period, and which play a huge role in del Toro's work, whether they're the larval creatures in *Melro* or the beautiful butterflies that occupy a room in *Chirron Peak*. Del Toro admits a particular fascination with a certain type of insect.

"The one in *Ren's Ladybird*, the *Phaenid*, the stick bug - they've always scared me and they've always looked almost supernatural to me. That's why I put them in the movie. We're going to have the original insect that I had bought from my first trip to New York City, at a store called *Naxos & Mendible*. I bought it as a



kid and thought it would be great to use in a movie as an angel, and it ended up in *Pan's Labyrinth*, that's the insect we actually scanned for the movie."

He adds, "We're going to have a lot of cabinets of curiosities-style little bits of memorabilia. We're going to have seashells that are weird, we're going to have different insects, beetles, entomological collections, things like that."

Of course, any in-depth exploration of del Toro's art requires a dive into the Lovecraftian depths. H.P.'s long face appears in *At Home With Monsters* as part of the "Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult" section, in the form of an incredibly detailed life-size statue by renowned sculptor Thomas Kinkadee. While it's taken from Bleak House, del Toro is also planning to add in some artifacts from his willona depiction of Lovecraft's *The Mountains of Madness*.

"I was thinking of including a couple of the concept sculptures, we are going to certainly include the one for the alien penguins, which is an image from the book that I love," he notes, adding that there will be plenty of Lovecraft-related art, including a piece by another famous filmmaker. "We're going to have a huge pastel concept piece by James Cameron for the *Alien* planet that he did for the movie. It was never really shown before, and is a part of the Collection of Bleak [house]."

The section of the exhibit encompasses religious iconography, as well. As an example, del Toro points to a particular piece that fans may recognize from one of his films.

"There is a beautiful, very large piece that normally you have in Mexico, you have a traditional woodwork that is a statue of an archangel killing a demon on the ground with a lance or a sword. And the demon is pushed straight into the floor, and the angel is killing it. You can see a large scale of that in the lobby of the BPO in Hollywood. The statue was done by a traditional artist in Mexico. Beautiful, it looks like something out of the 1800s but it is the reverse: the devil is killing the angel. It's very hard to notice at first, but now that I've told you, you'll see it."

A lighter side of del Toro's interests can be viewed in "Movies, Comics, Pop Culture," which will touch upon everything from Alfred Hitchcock and surrealist Luis Buñuel to Disney and modern comic books. As the press release for *At Home With Monsters* reminds us, it's here that del Toro "refuses to abide by the traditional hierarchy between high and

Low Angeles County Museum of Art curator Britt Salvesen takes us deeper into *At Home With Monsters*

A DOOR TO DEL TORO

by Dave Karger



How did you develop an interest in Guillermo del Toro's work?

First through his films — *Pan's Labyrinth* in particular — then through a profile published in the *New Yorker* that revealed more about his process and the environment he created in Bleak House.

Since he's in his early 40s, some would say it's premature to have him the focus of a show of this scope. What is it about his work and career that make it fitting for him to be given this treatment now?

Del Toro is particularly suited to a museum context because he is steeped in art and art history. A museum isn't just a venue or platform for him, it's a resource and a church of sorts. He reveres art and he reveres craft. Not only does he draw on art history, his own skills and obsessive match those of the artists who come before him. Therefore, our desire to create a show of, and about, his work was less about the length of his filmography and more about his range of inspirations and ways of channeling them.

Describe the working relationship between LACMA and del Toro in terms of putting this show together; he seems to be exceptionally hands-on with curating it.

On the museum side, we respect that Guillermo has a very demanding day job — he is working on many different projects that demand his attention. I've been fortunate to visit Bleak House a handful of times, and each time we've fleshed out another layer of ideas for the exhibition. He's exceptionally generous, imaginative and positive. It's inspiring for all of us at LACMA. And even though he's not full-time in LA, many of his regular collaborators are. Without exception, they have gone out of their way to help

us; the comment often is "Anything for Guillermo."

How then did you determine the categories?

They came out of conversations with Guillermo. I took note of the words he returned to when describing the house, his films, and the art he loves. At first, I had tried to construct a rigid outline based on the filmography. Then I realized it would be more interesting to identify the themes that ran through [the films]. Guillermo talks about themes — big, existential ideas — in a compelling, human way that one can connect to. It was exciting to take those ideas on, and to understand that the details of plots, characters, and production design all come from that source.

Tell us about a piece in the show that particularly fascinates you.

I learned about the existence of something called a "dental phantom," invented in the 1890s: an encasing-looking metal disembodied set of ramblies [as example is pictured]. When I saw Guillermo's dental phantom, I thought it was a steam-punk onomatopoeic skull of sorts — turns out it was used to train students in dentistry.

Was there anything in the show that took some real legwork to prepare?

Most of the items are coming directly from Guillermo's Bleak House. But still we have some challenges, for example, to find places for his life-size sculptures [of H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe, Ray Harryhausen and others] where they will be fully visible but protected from damage. Also, we're using some old-school special effects to recreate the perpetual thunderstorm Guillermo has in his "Bleak Room."

What do you hope people will take away from the exhibit?

I think they'll be inspired by Guillermo del Toro's conviction that art seeks across time and across the hierarchical boundaries that are sometimes placed around it.





THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE AND PAN'S LABYRINTH: STUDIES IN THE HORROR FILM

Daniel Olson, ed.
Centipede Press

When we're sifting through the filmography of Guillermo del Toro, it's easy to get lost in the images. Del Toro is a visual fabulist of the highest order, and the architect of one of modern cinema's most distinctive styles, no genre fan needs a roadmap to tell us when we've entered del Toro country.

But for every bleeding ghost or clockwork zombie, there are countless other paths to follow — narrative, symbolic and thematic trails that wind through the barelytamed thickets of the filmmaker's imagination. The density of del Toro's world has never been more apparent than in *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*.

Studies in the Horror Film, out now from Centipede Press. Though it's concerned with only two films from del Toro's oeuvre, the 416-page volume tackles a striking range of cerebral topics, from forgotten World War II history to the philosophy of ghosts.

The book is divided into two parts, the first of which contains ten essays by a bevy of scholars. Each chapter aims to unpack a film-specific theme, such as the lullaby me-

lods of Javier Navarrete's *Pan's Labyrinth* score or the eerie significance of amber — the colour and the substance — in *The Devil's Backbone*. Some of the entries venture too deep into the academic woods for casual readers, but wider themes emerge. Anne Tabor's "To Capture a Ghost" contrasts the evolution of cinematic spooks in Western and Eastern cultures, while editor Daniel Olson's "Pleasing Spectral Fathers" asks what it takes to elevate a film's villain from a forgettable heavy to a cinematic icon. The second half of the book compiles 21 interviews with cast and crew members, including a short but enter-

taining Q&A with regular del Toro cast member Doug Jones.

The volume is bolstered by previously unpublished photos, Centipede's trademark attention to production quality, and an introduction by del Toro himself. It's not for casual fans, but anyone hoping for an expertly guided tour through the latter realms of del Toro's imagination will not be disap-

pointed.

APRIL SWELLINGS

low culture."

"Black House has 750 pieces of original art from the likes of Edward Gorey, Richard Corben, Bernie Wrightson, Melus, Travis Lowe, King Wilson, Mary Blair, Will Eisner," says del Toro of his range of interests that one can expect to see on display in the section. "The part of that generation — obviously I'm a monster kid — that made monsters rock stars. And we really worshipped them; I'm part of the Aurora Monster Kit generation and Famous Monsters of Filmland — second generation — Crispy, Eerie, EC reprints in Mexico, all that sort of stuff."

He emphasizes that the categories in *At Home with Monsters* are fluid, so items may still get shuffled around to different sections. For example, while Wrightson fits nicely in "Movies, Comics, Pop Culture," his work might also be in "Frankenstein and Horror."

"We're going to have about nine original plates by Bernie Wrightson, from his *Frankenstein* book," says del Toro. "We're going to have an original Basil Gogos Frankenstein painting."

The monster is obviously very close to the filmmaker's heart (he's been trying to get his own Frankenstein movie off the ground for years) and Black House is full of art, busts and full-size sculptures of the creature. When talking about the iconic Universal monster, del Toro goes into the type of detailed rant reserved for the most diehard geeks, discussing the intricacies of the different versions of monster makeup between films, and how almost every artist gets it wrong by combining elements from different films or neglecting to express the soul of the monster.

"To me, Frankenstein's creature is one of those things where people say it's easy to do and you can see it on all sorts of model kits, fan work," he laments. "But I can tell you right now as a collector, worshipping man at the altar of this amazing creation by Jack Pierce, 90 percent of the stuff you see is bad."

As such, del Toro has made sure to include an entire subsection in the exhibit spotlighting the output of Los Angeles-based sculptor Mike Hill, whose Frankenstein's monster work is unparalleled in its detail.

"Mike Hill, in my book, is bar none a guy who is an authority," asserts del Toro. "In my collection, my relics, I can tell you that there is no level of likeness that I think eight percent of sculptors can achieve. And there there are two percent of sculptors who transcend that and truly sculpt characters."

More life-size sculptures make up parts of "Freaks and Mon-



sters," which expands on del Toro's fascination with the Frankenstein creature to explore the way monsters can "mirror the hypocrisies of society and bring light to corrosive standards of perfection."

He explains, "To me there's no such thing as a horrible freak because I truly don't view them with pity. I don't view them with scorn. I view everything in my collection and anything strange with great love. Again, it Mike Hill is the late-most creator of Boris Karloff and Frankenstein sculptures. Thomas Kinkadee is the funniest artist of Tod Browning's *Frankenstein* sculptures. So we have Schitzoo the Pinhead, Hans the Dwarf, Johnny Eck and Koo Koo the Bird Girl—all life-size and prepared throughout the installation."

Finally, *At Home with Monsters* will end with "Death and the Afterlife," which brings things full circle in more ways than one. Del Toro makes it clear that his interests lie solely in fantasy and not real death, which greatly affected him when he was very young.

"I detect real violence," he states. "I understand violence depicted in art as a sublimation or a horrible not that I despise. I don't collect anything remotely related to real murders or real murder photography. I am sickened by violence in real life. I saw my first body when I was four. It was a man decapitated by the side of the road. It made a huge impression on me, and neither my father nor my mother took the time to explain anything to me, and I was actually having flashbacks—proper flashbacks like in the movies—of that body. I think people tend to confuse horror movies with people that like horrible things. And what I'm after is the poetry of the dark. I don't want to see the real world. I want to reinterpret the real world."

"I don't want to see the real world. I want to reinterpret the real world."

—Guillermo del Toro

Instead, he says, "Death and the Afterlife" will host [tax] skeletons, skulls, medical oddities preserved in jars, hand-drawn anatomical engravings and other artwork. Plus, it will have one of the strangest and most compelling pieces of his entire collection, an original sketch by artist Charles Altamont Doyle, the father of Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle who was institutionalized in the 1880s for depression and alcoholism. Del Toro says he finds it fascinating

because it resonates on multiple levels.

"[I have] one of the last drawings Arthur Conan Doyle's father made in the asylum, a drawing in which he welcomes death as a friend, which is very moving because it's a real artist from a real man who fathered one of the greatest minds of all of literature, but it is also related to welcoming death."

To properly categorize and present the hundreds of items on display in *At Home with Monsters*, del Toro dedicated himself to spending two weeks at the museum before the opening doing prep work in order to give attendees an even more immersive experience than they would have touring *Black House*.

The good news for those who can't catch the exhibit in Los Angeles is that there are currently two more stops planned for

the exhibit. It will travel to the Minneapolis Institute of Art to be displayed from February 26 to May 21, 2017, and then to Toronto, where it will run at the Art Gallery of Ontario from September 30, 2017 to January 7, 2018.

At Home with Monsters may be the most comprehensive exhibit focusing on a genre creator's work ever mounted, but then again, so

few creators have so much available to give of themselves. Del Toro's toughest gig to date might just be narrowing down the number of items that lay bare the dark chambers of his horror-loving heart, but he's clearly excited by the prospect of it.

"The thing that most people say when they visit *Black House* is, 'It's like walking inside of your head,' and it really is!"



Among friends! Del Toro with a *Melody* statue and a life-size effigy of Schitzoo the Pinhead; a replica of Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's Monster; and (opposite) a bust of the Angel of Death from *Melody 2* amongst various ephemera

DSGOD PERKINS, SON OF PSYCHO STAR ANTHONY PERKINS, CHANNELS PERSONAL TRAGEDY IN HIS SATANIC THRILLER THE BLACKCOAT'S DAUGHTER

To The Daughter... A Devil

by SEAN PLUMMER



FROM THE SUPERFICIAL PERSPECTIVE OF A HORROR MAGAZINE WRITER

by SEAN PLUMMER

The Blackcoat's Daughter, tonier actor Dagwood Perkins' first film as a writer-director, would not only be a horror film but one that would at least tangentially address his parents' deaths. Dagwood, 42, is, after all, the eldest son of the late Anthony Perkins, star of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) as well as a host of lesser fright fare. The elder Perkins died of AIDS on September 12, 1992, when Dagwood was eighteen years old; his mother, photographer Berry Berenson, was a passenger aboard one of the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center on 9/11. Was it inevitable we wonder, that his first directorial effort would be a horror film that explored his feelings about these losses? His reply is hesitant one.

"I suppose," he allows. "Yeah, yeah, I suppose. I think my answer is /suppose."

The question is not meant to be intrusive. Perkins himself, in the film's press notes, says that *The Blackcoat's Daughter* is a "stylized reflection of the loss of my own parents." In the film, originally titled *February* when it premiered at last fall's Toronto International Film Festival, it is the teenage Kat (Kiersey Clemons) who suffers that loss and abandonment when her mother and father fail to pick her up from Brimford, her all-girls prep school, for winter break.

Also staying at the school over the holidays is older student Rose (Lucy Boynton) who's enlisted by the administration to look in on Kat. Rose is less than enthusiastic about being a babysitter and starts worrying when her quiet young charge begins acting strangely, seemingly possessed by

a demonic force.

Meanwhile, a troubled young woman named Joan (American horror story's Emma Roberts) makes her way towards Brimford on a chilly night in the company of Rose's parents (played by Lauren Holly and James Remar) who are on their own bad mission.

The exact nature of Kat's condition remains mysterious. Has her loneliness and vulnerability allowed Satan himself to seduce her? Is that chilling voice at the other end of the telephone the Devil or simply a figment of Kat's overworked imagination? Has her mind snapped? Perkins is happy to let the audience decide for itself.

"I have no specific feeling about it," he says. "I just respond in general to classical themes, classical ideas, classical symbols sort of made new. And Satan is such a useful shorthand for all of the darkness that is within us [and] that is out there. It's not that I believe in some hooved thing. It's rather that there is darkness that's attractive, and there is darkness that can seduce you. And there is an elegance to darkness, there is a value to darkness. The idea of Satan is very sexy and regal. Darkness has its own appeal."

Perkins should know. He began his acting career playing one of cinema's darkest characters, a young Norman Bates, in *Psycho II* (1963), the sequel that retained his father to his most famous role. He then started co-writing scripts in the 2000s, most notably 2015's *The Girl in the Photographs* (the last film Wes Craven produced prior to his death last year). *The Blackcoat's Daughter* is Perkins' first produced solo screenplay. "I just wanted to write a script that was marketable," he says. "And so [was] thinking about the horror genre, which for me always had a sentiment-



bel quickly because of my old man — the same way anybody watches their father do something and wants to sort of do what Dad does.”

“Sort of” is the key phrase here: Perkins knows that the best horror film his father ever made was *Psycho*. Every scary movie he was part of after that, including 1989’s *Edge of Sanity* and the 1990 TV movie *Psycho IV: The Beginning*, was, by comparison, inferior (though *Psycho IV* has a dedicated fanbase).

“Certainly as I was coming into my more formative years he was making sh!t horror movies,” Perkins says. “And at the same time an appreciation was growing in me for the great movies, an appreciation for the classical ones, and an appreciation for the more humanistic of the horror genre classics. Less *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, more *Rosemary’s Baby*, *Carnie* — which I just find to be a very sad film, as opposed to a ‘far’ horror movie. Something about people and more about the human experience — those are the movies I was drawn towards.”

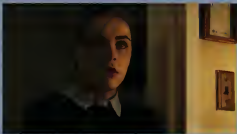
When Perkins sat down to write *The Blackcoat’s Daughter*, he found himself looking to the tropes and tones of those classic films. (Similarly, he would end up giving his cast a list of movies to watch, including *Rosemary’s Baby*, *The Shining* and the original *Cave*.) The 2008 Swedish vampire film *Let the Right One In* was also a significant influence.

“I rarely see movies and wish I’d made that movie,” he says. “It was such a beautifully composed, sad turn on a familiar genre trope that I was really compelled by it and really touched by it.”

Like *Let the Right One In*, Perkins’ film relies heavily on atmosphere and character, rather than monsters, gore, or over-the-top violence. And like that movie, there’s a quiet, snowy darkness to Perkins’ work that’s particularly compelling. His script attracted a lot of attention before it was picked up by Unbroken Pictures, a production company co-founded by *The Shallows* director Bryan Bertino. Bertino briefly considered directing *The Blackcoat’s Daughter* himself before it was suggested that Perkins do it.

Finding financing, however, proved difficult, until Emma Roberts, hot off her turn playing a young witch in the third season of the hit FX show *American Horror Story*, committed. Shooting took place over six frigid weeks in early 2015 in and around Ottawa, Ontario, with the Ontario Agricultural College’s Kemphill Campus standing in for Branford.

The Blackcoat’s Daughter ultimately is — it isn’t already obvious by the way Perkins refers to it — as sad as it is horrific. Without dropping spoilers, the movie slowly builds to a disturbing climax with some shocking and bloody twists along the way (it’s similar in tone to Ti West’s *The House of the Devil*, which is fitting given the inspiration behind the initial *Blackcoat* trials that the process of writing and filming *Daughter* was ultimately cathartic.



Impassionable Young Women: (from top) Emma Roberts as Jane, Alexxis Shipley as Ari, and Lucy Boynton as Rose, and (opposite insert) the original poster for the film when it was called *February*

“Other experiences beyond just writing it and making the movie have encouraged me to be in better contact with — I don’t want to say spirits — but to be in contact with the fact that my parents are still around in some form. I’ll be honest, when times grew real tough on the movie — financing was impossible, weather was impos-

sible, schedule was impossible, it was the hardest thing I’ve ever done — I tried my best to sort of feel the presence of my parents, and it worked. I don’t know if it had anything to do with what I wrote, but it kind of has to because I wrote this movie where time is a location, where February is a place.”



— RUE MORCUE —

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i t a p p l i e s t o t h e m o s t c h e a p a n d a l w a y s l u n d m o v i e s c r a n k e d o u t b y t h e
I t a l i a n f i l m i n d u s t r y i n t h e e a r l y ' 6 0 s. W e l l - k n o w n e x a m p l e s i n c l u d e *Alien 2: On
Earth* (1982), *Canibal/Apocalypse* (1980), *Hell of the Living Dead* (1980) a n d
Canibal Ferox (1981).

T h e p r o d u c e r s o f t h e s e t o c k y " b r a s h t i e p e c e s " w e r e e a g e r t o c a s h i n o n t h e
i n t e r n a t i o n a l s u c c e s s o f t w o k e y f o k i e n f i l m s - L u c i o F u l l i ' s g l o r i o u s l y g a r y

Zombie (1979) a n d R u g g e r o D e s d e a t o ' s e x t r e m e v e r i t e s h o c k e r *Canibal Holocaust* (1980). P r o d u c e r F e l i x x D e A n g e l o c o b b l e d t o g e t h e r a q u i c k a n d d i r t y
m a s h - u p o f b o t h o f t h e s e f i l m s i n w h a t i s t h e c o n t a m i n a t e e x a m p l e o f s p a g h e t t i
s p l a t t e r, M a r i o G a r a n i ' s *Zombie Holocaust* (1980). L e g e n d a r y 42nd S t r e e t
i m p r e s s o T e r r y L i v e s e t h e n a c q u i r e d i t f o r d i s t r i b u t i o n i n t h e U n i t e d S t a t e s,
m a d e s o m e i n t e r e s t i n g c h a n g e s, c r e a t e d a b r i l l i a n t m a r k e t i n g c a m p a i g n, a n d
d r o p p e d t h e n o w g r i d h o u s e c l a s s i c *Doctor Butcher, M.D.* o n a n u n s u s p e c t i n g
p u b l i c.

L i k e *Zombie*, *Doctor Butcher* s t a r s S c o t t i s h a c t o r I a n M c C u l l o c h i n t h e s e c o n d
o f a t r i o o f s p a g h e t t i s p l a t t e r f i l m s h e a p p e a r e d i n t h a t a l s o i n c l u d e s L u i g i C o c c i ' s



Contaminious (1981). Before that, McCulloch had a principal role in *Survivors*, a 1975 BBC television series that turned out to be a huge hit in Italy. He suddenly found himself an Italian film star.

"I was doing a play in the West Country of England and I got a phone call from my agent saying that an Italian film company wanted me to do one of their films," recalls the 70-year-old McCulloch from his home in England. "It was a ridiculous amount of money. There were locations in New York, locations in the Caribbean, locations in Rome, and a healthy living allowance. They didn't want to see me, they didn't want to test me, all they wanted me to do was say, yes, I'd do the film. Three weeks or four weeks later, I was in New York filming *Zombie*."

The film proved to be a hit at the box office, and McCulloch was quickly approached to do the lower-budgeted *Zombie Holocaust*. The rather confused plot mirrors key elements of both of the films it gleefully rips off. After a string of misadventures in a New York hospital, a Southeast Asian orderly is caught in the act of eviscerating a human heart carved out of a corpse. He immediately leaps out a window to his death. Leon Ridgeway (Alexander Dells Gail), medical anthropology student at the scene, recognizes a chest tattoo that identifies him as a member of the cannibal cult at Kila, from the island of the same name. McCulloch, playing Peter Chandler, a city official of some sort, investigates the bizarre crime and learns of a string of similar murders and murders around the country. For reasons never given, Chandler signposts an expedition to the Holocaust islands with Lori, his assistant George Hepper (Peter O'Hara) and George's racy reporter girlfriend Susan (Sherry Buchanan). There they are met by Dr. Gerson (Donald O'Brien), who organizes a boat and a guide for a trip to the cannibal-infested island of Kila. Soon, Chandler discovers that Gerson is an Kila and that he's transplanting brains in cannibals in order to resurrect the dead, creating an army of zombies in the process.

While *Zombie* was shot in the Caribbean, the tropical setting of *Zombie Holocaust* required some movie magic.

"It was shot in New York and Italy," in the Portofino Merguez," recalls McCulloch. "During Mussolini's time in the '30s, it was a mosquito-ridden and nasty place. One of the things Mussolini did to get people working was to drain the marshes, but they were left looking tropical, to the extent that it was one of the principal locations where they filmed *Chaplin* (1963). It's near the place called Laticia, which was where we were based. It's really tropical, has the right amount of trees, the right amount of water, and it's far enough away from the airport that planes aren't flying overhead. It's a pretty place but sadly there were some pretty boring houses nearby."

The principal attraction of *Zombie Holocaust* is of course the cross and other unbecoming gore effects. Heads are cut off, chests sliced open, hearts removed, stomachs slit and eyes gouged out. And then there's the film's most iconic gore gag: Peter ramming a running offshore motor into the skull of a creeping cannibal. McCulloch is unsure of the gross-out of the scene.

"I thought at one stage I'd actually suggested that, that you'd have to check with the censor



Washed Away: The *Zombies of Doctor Butcher M.D.* (left) and, (top) the famous chest motor-in-the-face gag, and (opposite) medical staff discover a corpse with its heart ripped out.

script, it probably didn't think of it. It was just one of those scenes we did on the beach. You just knew it was going to be pretty gory, and the special effects guy was going to have a feast sorting out whatever the blades of the outboard motor did to the poor cannibal. The star of *Zombie* to me was undoubtedly (Silvestro) De Rosa, the mekap and special effects guy, and his assistant (Alessandro Tressi), who did the principal work on *Zombie Holocaust*. I don't think he can talk about this film in the same breath as De Rosa, who I think was a genius."

McCulloch explains the origin of the story of the "missing" scene in which Dells Gail falls into a pit trap and McCulloch has to fight off a pair of machine-wielding cannibals with a pick. It's a glimpse into the ghoulish tale of the film.

"I had to go back to Rome because in sending it to the States, they said it was too short and wanted another 30 minutes or so, so I shot some extra stuff that was even more silly than the original. Then, whoever it was in the States put a new beginning on both another film, changed the title to *Doctor Butcher M.D.* and loaned New York with a positive and protective publicity campaign that ensured success."

Grimed, 42nd Street and the greenhouse that were an it may be in memory, but film distributor Terry Levine, who released *Halloween* (1978) and brought *Shogun* (1979), *Alfie* (1980), *The Shogun* (1981), *Cannibal Ferox* (1981) and *7 Doors of Death* (1981) to the States, is not. At 86, he's the last independent distributor in the business.

"We're based in Englewood for the last 18 years," explains Levine. "We moved away from 42nd Street and have offices in Englewood, warehouses in Englewood and a number of theatres in northern New Jersey. It makes some sense for us to be here."

Levine started Aquarius Releasing in, by his reckoning, 1961 or 1962, and he and his family are involved on 42nd Street, but his distributors are served a much greater role. He needed product and periodically visited Rome to acquire films.

"The Italians were very good at copying successful American action-oriented films, producing them rather inexpensively, and selling them to all world markets. Whenever a picture broke, they'd have somebody over here in five minutes, they'd see what the picture was and literally duplicate it. They



The Meat Of The Market: (left to right) One of the undead zombie leads on the set of an expedition member caught in a trap, and Dr. Peter Chandler (Ian McCulloch) and Lori Ridgeway (Alexandra Dell Cole) encounter some of the gossamer zombie leads.

didn't cost a lot money to make: they could be said relatively cheap, and with a good exploitation campaign there was no problem turning a small dollar."

Levene saw potential in *Zombie Holocaust*, but felt it needed some work. He added footage from an unfinished anthology film titled *Tales That'll Tear Your Heart Out* that Street Trash producer Ray Frankles had made with some students.

"I took a look at the picture, and I thought, it was a little on the short side. What I wanted to do was create a premise, and I wanted the premise to be done in a fashion that it opened Doctor Butcher up. I wanted to explain, if I possibly could, the reason that these lunatics went into some Amazonia-type jungle and discovered these primitive people, and why they were doing that. We got the footage from Ray Frankles, who was an independent filmmaker, and I believe at the time an adjunct professor at a university. He looked it to the picture and it basically worked. It gave the picture a degree of respectability."

Along with adding the introduction, Levene scrapped the original score — composed of cues by Italian composer Nino Fodino recycled from the *Black Zombie* films — and commissioned a new electronic soundtrack.

"We used Walter Seal and his company for the soundtrack. I'd used him on a number of pictures. He produced about 31 or 32 pictures, and I'd always felt that music was a great way to heighten the value of a picture rather inexpensively. You can get many things with the use of music and soundtracks. So while the Italian producers on the cheap side would want to go with a library soundtrack, I'd go for something that gave us depth and another dimension. Their soundtrack was a big nothing. I gave the picture some degree of body and suspense. This was no cheap knock-off on Wednesday afternoon, I think there was four days drafting and creating

music for Doctor Butcher."

Then the film needed no advertising campaign, and there are few in exploitation history that rival the *Doctor Butcher* campaign.

"Aquarius, using a company called Shoreline Records, has for 60 years or so created all of our campaigns, all of our trailers, all of our trailers, all of our TV and radio spots. In those days, we would look our pictures in major markets like New York, 75 or 80 theaters on wide area runs. The *Doctor Butcher M.D.* campaign — 'Medical Deviants, and he makes house calls' — besides being funny, tickled the strange. Dealing with the public's emotional entertainment needs is a tricky question, you've got to do things in a fashion that doesn't cross them to avert the situation. Visuals are very, very important, so subsequently we would come up with colorful campaigns and a kooky logo. Many times the campaigns would be for superior to the actual picture!"

Doctor Butcher, M.D. enjoyed a wide release on VHS by Fangton Video Productions in 1993, but has never been out an optical disc. Media Masters, through their Shock Show imprint, released the original edit of *Zombie Holocaust* DVD in 2002 and an Blu-ray in 2011. Now, on July 26, Severin Films presents a full restoration of *Doctor Butcher M.D.* in high definition, along with a new transfer of *Zombie Holocaust* and the definitive set of supplements. The double disc set will include, for *Doctor Butcher*, a 2K scan of the American cut for the first time ever on disc, *The Doctor Butcher*, a 40-minute interview with Levene, *The Doctor Butcher Movie Series*, a 17-minute interview

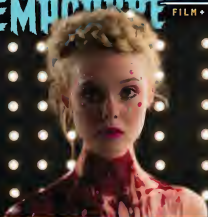
with Gore Gore film editor Rick Sullivan, *Shred on the Deuce*, a 22-minute tour of 42nd Street with Frankles and Chris Poggali of the Temple of Schlock blog, a three-minute look at the New York City filming locations, now and then, Frankles' segment of the unfinished anthology film *Tales That'll Tear Your Heart Out*, and a trailer. The *Zombie Holocaust* disc will include a 2K scan of the film, *Horror Afro*, a twelve-minute interview with McCulloch, *Abel of the Zombies*, a 22-minute interview with FX artist Rosendo Prestipino, an eight-minute segment in which Levene is remembered by his son, filmmaker Eric Carleton (1980: *The Doctor Hammond*), interviews with stars Buchanan and O'Brien, and a trailer.

Clearly, gore fans have a zombie-like hunger for is that a cannibal-like hunger? for the strangeness of the film that's kept it alive all these years.

"Of the three films I did, two of them were video nasties — *Zombie* and *Condemned* — but bizarrely enough because there's far more gore and splatter, *Zombie Holocaust* hasn't on the nasty list," says McCulloch. "It was considered, but it wasn't banned. It's full of non-sexualities. I was just adding a referee about how a lot of things are brought up and immediately dropped

without any explanation, and that there are a few problems with continuity that also make it sort of bizarre, but here we are talking about it all these years later and there's a showing now Blu-ray coming out, so it obviously has something for a awful lot of people. A lot of people love it and can't get enough of it."





SKIN DEEP

THE NEON DEMON

Starring Elle Fanning, Jesse Malton and Abbey Lee
Directed by Nicolas Winding Refn
Written by Nicolas Winding Refn, Mary Lambert
and Polly Stenerson
D Films

There is no doubting Nicolas Winding Refn's horror pedigree: *The Drive* and *Bronson* director is producing the *Maniac* Cop and *Witchfinder* General re-makes, has helped rehabilitate the reputation of British cult director Andy Milligan (*The Naked Witch*, *Torians Dungeon*) and has presented restored versions of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and Mano Ravi's *Planet of the Vampires* at no less prestigious a venue than Cannes. What have you done for horror lately?

So when it was announced that the Danish filmmaker would follow his divisive drama *Only God Forgives* (2013) with a horror movie called *The Neon Demon*, it thrilled those of us who love Refn's brand of kinetic cinema. The final film, though, proves to be no less a counterblast than *Only God Forgives*, which was boxed at Cannes but retains a violent beauty that

makes it linger in the mind. That's an obtuse way of saying that *The Neon Demon* is simultaneously beautiful and grotesque. But is it good?

Elle Fanning (Saper 8) plays Jesse, a parentless teen who comes to Los Angeles to model. Jesse has it, and those who quickly flock around her know it, too. That includes Ruby (Lena Marone), Donna (Zank), an older makeup artist whose fascination with the younger girl could be love or psychosis, and Sasha (Abbey Lee, *Mid Winter Fairy Road*) and Gigi (Bella Heathcote, *Dark Shadows*), veteran models who hunger — literally — for what Jesse possesses.

Firstly, *The Neon Demon* is a ravishing cinematic experience. If *Bess* and *Argento* are worshipped for making horror beautiful, Refn and cinematographer Natasha Braier should be similarly lauded. They use the aesthetics of high fashion photography and advertising to make depravity luridous and sensual. At times you wonder if you are watching a couture commercial — until the blood starts to flow. And Refn knows how to make violence oh so delectable.

The film's themes — Hollywood has a dark side, society judges women by impossible standards — are not new, but the way *The Neon Demon* fleshes them out, especially literally, makes

it one of the strongest horror films in recent memory. Love it and/or hate it, but see it.

SEAN PLUMMER

CHIRS THAT SCARE

THE CONJURING 2

Starring Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson and Madison Wolfe
Directed by James Wan
Written by Carey Hayes, Chad Hayes, James Wan, et. al
Warner Bros

If there's a nothing chow at your house that the previous homeowner died in and now continues to sit in as a ghost — when he's not destroying the rest of your home and trying to drive you out — here's an idea: throw the fucking thing away.

There are reasons the series isn't titled *The Conspiring*, as you're gonna have to decide if you're interested in *The Conjuring 2* because it's a chillingly realistic portrayal of a supposed haunting that'll give you lingering nightmares, or if you're seeking two-plus hours of spooky atmosphere and thrill-ride scares.

If you're in the latter category, you're in luck,





The Conjuring 2

because director James Wan crafts some of his best scares yet in telling the "true" story of the Enfield Haunting. Set in the 1970s, it's based on the case files of real-life supernatural investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren, played again by Patrick Wilson (*Jacob's Ladder*) and Vera Farmiga (*Stoker*). This time, our polyester ghost-busters — fresh off the infamous case that inspired *The Amityville Horror* — travel to England to help a family in the grip of a ghost, or is it something worse?

The Hodgson family, composed of mother-in-law Peggy (Frances O'Connor, *The Hunt*) and her two daughters and two sons, are experiencing paranormal events centered around youngest daughter Janet (Madison Wolfe), who's being tormented by the aforementioned former owner of the groovy-ass chair. Also mucking about are other investigators, based on real-life personalities including Maurice Gross (David Thewlis, *The Harry Potter* series).

As for our heroes the film further develops the relationship between Ed and Lorraine, Farmiga is likable as the weary, wounded dove psychic whose powers draw her dangerously close to the Devil's minions, while Wilson exudes the right amount of amiable regular Joe-ness with a side of bravery.

The Conjuring 2 billows with its characters and plot act in service of the scares, and not the other way around. A Babadook-inspired spook is introduced that doesn't fit the world of *The Conjuring*; no one seems concerned that the basement is dangerously flooded (what could it possibly be hiding?), and one outrageous sequence sees Ed wake up from a nightmare to cheerfully paint a hideous demon, which he then hangs in his office(!). This laughable bit sets up an absolutely hair-raising sequence, though, so if you're okay with that, then take a walk on the Warren side.

Otherwise you'll have your own restless nights wondering why that goddamned chair wasn't haunting the curb.

DAVE ALEXANDER

KILL AND KILL AGAIN

SCREAM: THE TV SERIES

Starring: Milla Jovovich, Ben Taylor-Klaus and John Karna

Directed by Brian Koppelman, Jander Elands, Tim Ruster, et al
Written by David Gogginshall, Meredith Goggin, Erin Maher, et al
Anchor: Ray

The *Scream* film series is a certifiable classic that came at a time when the horror genre was at a low point. With Wes Craven working from a script from then up-and-coming writer Kevin Williamson and a strong cast that included Neve Campbell and Courtney Cox, *Scream* managed to make a lot of money and impress critics. Two decades and three sequels later, the franchise made it to the small screen as a ten-episode series for MTV.

Even with Craven serving as Executive Producer prior to his untimely passing, the idea of turning a two-hour movie into episodic television would have been daunting, if not downright dumb. However, despite characters even less likable than those in the films and scripts rife with both horror and teen drama clichés, *Scream: The TV Series* still finds a way to keep you engaged.

The show, which is set in its own universe from the films and features a variation on the murderer's iconic mask, details the lives of the teens of Lakewood, who are not only forced to deal with a serial killer in their midst, but also the repercussions of their own teenage issues and angst. It hits a lot of topical beats, including the rampant problem of cyber-bullying. In these instances, the series means well but does the subject a real disservice, as those affected seem to have a relatively easy time shaking off the horrible actions of others. While my teenage years may be long gone, I can't imagine it being so easy for anyone to simply shake it up after their personal moments go viral, but that happens throughout the series' first season.

This being *Scream*, pop culture and examination of self-awareness are also part of the package and for the most part it works well. Also, props to MTV for allowing some surprisingly gruesome kills (such as a head glued in half) that would have been right at home in the '80s. While not the classic reinvention of the genre that the movies are, *Scream: The TV Series* will leave you eager to see how things play out during its second season, which airs this summer.

AMITY BURNS

FALED IT ON LANDING

FLIGHT 7500

Starring: Ryan Reynolds, Leslie Bibb and Amy Smart

Directed by Takashi Shimizu

Written by Craig Kesselring

Language

Like the fates of the planes and ships alleged to have disappeared over the Bermuda Triangle, the whereabouts of *Flight 7500* was a mystery for years. It was shot in Los Angeles in early 2012 by *The Grudge* director Takashi Shimizu and was supposed to come out later that year before being yanked from release schedules multiple times. Some have speculated that the downing of Malaysian Flight 370 in 2014 further delayed its release. Let us just say that *Flight 7500* should continue to fly under your radar.

True, *Blood's* Ryan Reynolds plays Brad, one of the passengers aboard the titular LA-to-Tokyo flight. He's unhappily married to Pia (Amy Smart), and we soon discover that all the film's major characters have an unresolved issue about to come to the fore (and aft). All is relatively well until a passenger with a mysterious wooden box stowed in his overhead compartment dies following some severe turbulence. The contents of that box set off a series of odd occurrences and deaths that culminate in a twist ending that's both familiar and obvious.

Yes, *Flight 7500* crashes and burns. According to the brief marketing of featurette that accompanied the main feature, the movie's antagonist was originally supposed to be an alien before being changed close to production — a spoiler alert — a ghost, perhaps to accommodate Shimizu's perceived strengths as an architect of *The Grudge* franchise. That lack of narrative focus comes through in the final act as the passengers (very) slowly work out what it is they are up against.

Flight 7500's other failure is emphasized by Brad's in-flight viewing of the *Twilight Zone* episode "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet," about a nervous flier who is the only passenger to witness a gremlin tearing at the plane's wing. While it may seem to emulate the terror induced by that



classic TV episode (which, as an aside, seems an unlikely choice of auteur entertainment), *Flight 2909*, even at a sparse 79 minutes, is crippled by a lack of atmosphere, focus and coherent plotting.

They most certainly did not nail it on the landing, take off or flight itself.

SEAN PLUMMER

A DANGEROUS MIND

DEMENTIA

Starring Gene Jones: Kristina Klebe and Huzefa Harrison
Directed by Mike Finkel
Written by Meredith Berg
IFC Midnight

Watching one's parents age can be terrifying. The idea of being responsible for those who were responsible for you, as they become a shell of themselves, is a tragic reminder of your own mortality. Mike Finkel's *Dementia* hammers that point home strongly, albeit rather predictably.

Gene Jones plays George, a Vietnam veteran suffering flashbacks due to the atrocities he witnessed as a prisoner of war. Things take a turn for the worse when, after having a stroke, he's diagnosed with dementia. Enter Michelle (Kristina Klebe), a nurse hired by George's estranged son, who initially seems to have George's best interests at heart before turning into Anne Wilkes' younger, more attractive psycho sister. Driven by revenge for something that occurred in George's past, she drags him.

When he wakes up, his cat is dead and he's covered in blood, left struggling to make sense of what's happening in the meantime. George's granddaughter (Huzefa Harrison) is trying to establish a relationship with him, a man she hardly knows, all while realizing that there's something off with grandpa's new nurse.

Best known to genre fans as the maniacal cult leader in *The Sacrament*, Gene Jones delivers a performance that's both strong and vulnerable, he manages to convey the duality in George that many have seen in those suffering from dementia. At one moment he's lucid and his old self, the next he's combative, frustrated and forgetful. *Dementia* rests on Jones' shoulders and he delivers an exceptional performance in a sadly lackluster film. The script by Meredith Berg is fairly predictable and lacks insight into the disease, and while it's immediately clear that his nurse is victimizing George, as the story progresses the audience is left with a series of characters that are far from likeable or appealing.

Even with a solid performance from its leading man, what could have been an intelligent suspense film about a horrible illness is ultimately a forgettable, paint-by-numbers, often boring, psycho nurse story that we've seen too many times before.

ANDY BURNS



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE LOCATES HIS LADY J

FOSTER CARE



JUNE

Anchor Bay Entertainment

June's young life has always been shitty. After being born into a cult that wanted to sacrifice her so she could be fused with a demon that would bring darkness to the world, she was then fostered out to neckbeaks only in it for the money. And just when it looked like she'd finally found a good home, her demon neckbeak comes seeking the body it was promised. Kudos to director L. Gustavo Cooper for crafting a tense, emotionally storming film that rests on the believability of the actress chosen to play June. Luckily, Kennedy Bruce is perfect for the part. The film's ambiguous ending is unexpected – but hopefully means a sequel is coming.

RODGY COUNT: 12

BEST DEATH SCENE: Pawling gets throat slit with scissors

UNFAITHFULLY YOURS



TO JENNIFER

MVD Visual

Obsession is dangerous when coupled with feelings of revenge. Just ask Joey, the main character in *To Jennifer*, who receives a text from his girlfriend asking him to come over to her house so they can finish what they started the previous night. Problem is, he lives hundreds of miles away and hasn't seen her in weeks. Infusing the help of his cousin, he decides to catch her in the act and present the film to her as a token of her infidelity. But things get shockingly complicated as his emotional state deteriorates and his desire to confront her grows. The final minutes are incredibly unnerving and really epitomize the found-footage genre in an uncomfortable yet appreciated direction.

RODGY COUNT: 3

BEST DEATH SCENE: Quin stabbed to death by his best friend

NAME GAMES



2 JENNIFER

Sector 8 Films

Sound familiar? Well, it's the unofficial sequel to *To Jennifer*. Hunter Johnson's half-length directorial debut features him as Spencer, a filmmaker who decides to document his journey to Los Angeles after apparently getting the go-ahead to make the movie. But something's off with Spencer right from the start as he reveals that his lead's name is Jennifer. He awkwardly chooses from a handful of Jennifer's and he finds the perfect one (bring the way we got an inspired comes from *She's Funny That Way*). Shot almost entirely on a cellphone, *2 Jennifer* is better than the original and features a startling ending that'll leave you wanting a shower.

RODGY COUNT: 7

BEST DEATH SCENE: Salt-infected lawyer's execution

LAST CHANCE LANCE

REISSUES



WEST STANDS THE TEST

BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR (1989) Blu-ray

Starring Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott and Patricia Siskley
Directed by Brian Yusa

Written by Rick Fry, Vito Kyrt and Brian Yusa
Arrow Films

While *Re-Animator* remains a gold standard splatter movie of the '80s, its sequel *Bride of Re-Animator* has long been unfairly dismissed. Granted, tapping the groundbreaking gore comedy was impossible and the sequel lacked the demented guiding hand of Stuart Gordon. Yet, working under ridiculous time constraints almost alongside his pervasively satirical debut *Society*, Brian Yusa delivered a satisfyingly sick and grungy follow-up that's finally getting almost too much respect on Blu-ray.

As Yusa reveals in a new interview on the disc, the script was compiled hastily when money suddenly appeared. So, it's an understandably sloppy affair opening with doctors Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs) and Cain Cain (Bruce Abbott) reanimating corpses on a battlefield, before turning to a more

budget-conscious plot involving the titular bride comprised from stolen body parts, including the heart of Barbara Crompton's character from the first *Re-Animator*—sadly it's the only part of her that returns.

The film is a mix of clever and stupid story devices connected by Yusa's wonky camp comedy and Combs' lovingly ludicrous presence. The surreal splatter effects truly deliver when they arrive, whether it's a dropping bride from 1918, nightmare body-part presumes from Screaming Mad George, or the ridiculous sight of a severed head flying with batwings. *Bride of Re-Animator* is downright nuts. Rawed? Sure, but also hilarious and imaginatively disgusting.

The Blu-ray presentation is a revelation given that the movie has only ever been available in cheap full-frame releases or leftover laser disc transfers (judding or otherwise). Aside from a few grainy scenes, due to the use of raw unrated footage or dated optical effects, the movie looks beautiful and probably sounds better than it ever did theatrically. In addition to including both the unrated and R-rated cuts (though why anyone would watch a censored splatter movie



is beyond me), all of the old commentaries and onsets features (filled with bonus VHS set footage) are ported over from the '80s releases. But the best features are the new ones, such as a fresh interview and commentary from Yusa (who is shockingly subdued and even scholarly for a man who specialized in slooze) and a fascinating look back at the makeup effects delivered by an all-star team of artists just starting out in the industry. It's a stacked release lovingly honouring a movie ripe for rediscovery by weirdos everywhere.

PHIL BROWN

MORE BRAINS FOR YOUR BUCK

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD (1985) Blu-ray

Starring Thom Mathews, James Karen and Lonnie Rappley
Written and directed by Gus O'Sullivan
Screen Factory

In 2008, Circle K opened in Tulsa, Oklahoma—a staunchly conservative city in a hyper-conservative state—hosted its first-ever *Slumber Party*, a horror movie marathon challenging patrons to "survive the night" by staying up until the wee hours of the morning. It's telling that the film chosen to kick off the event, which is now a yearly pilgrimage for Oklahoma's counterculture, was *The Return of the Living Dead*. This is the touchstone horror film for those who came of age at the height of '80s conservatism, a horror-comedy collocation for the disenchanted. Plus, it's a great zombie flick.

Warehouse stock boy Freddy (Thom Mathews) has the worst first day in history in an attempt to impress his boss Frank (James Karen) shows him an old drum containing what we're told is basically the sole "surviving" zombie (the famous slummy "Terman," played by Allan Treshman from *Night of the Living Dead*). As Frank explains, the film was based on a true story, one that ended with the government seizing up the living dead and restoring order. The drum has been ill-maintained, though, and one good slap causes it to burst open, releasing its inhabitant and unleashing a gas that resurrects the dead. That's bad news, not just for Freddy but also for the punks he runs with, who've aimed early to pick him up—and decided to kill him at the cemetery across the street.

Released when punk was still gaining acceptance in the mainstream, *Return* was something of a watershed moment, marking one of the first times members of the subculture were depicted as heroes. This is also the film that salvaged the



zombie genre from the libian forests of the late '70s, retaining intelligence and genuine scares to a subgenre that appeared to be on its last creative legs.

Screen Factory's Blu-ray release is packed so full of extras that the 2k interpositive scan of the film actually starts to feel like supplementary material. In addition to 220 minutes of bonus features recycled from earlier releases, there are new commentaries from author Gary Smart, actors Thom Mathews and John Philbin, and three new 30-minute documentaries: *The FX of the Living Dead*, *Party Time* (covering the now-legendary punk/yellie soundtrack) and a tour of the shooting locations. *ReLoD* may have aged, but it hasn't decayed; a re-watch quickly demonstrates it's just as relevant in 2016 as it was in 1985.

PRESTON FASSEL

GOO ON YOU

THE STUFF (1985) *Revue*

Starring Michael Moriarty, Garrett Morris and Andrew Macdonald
Written and directed by Larry Cohen
Arrow Video

Larry Cohen fans, rejoice! Arrow Video has unearthed *The Stuff* for an HD assault on America. Chronicling the attack of an edible ooze, the '80s cult favorite makes up *The Blob* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* in a job at Regan-Eri co-surrealism.

First found bubbling from a hole in the ground, the gelatinous *Stuff* is instantaneously commercialized and turned into America's most popular dessert! Despite being ubiquitously embraced and marketed, a few individuals suspect it may not be as safe as the FDA claims. Enter ten-year-old Jason (Scott Bloom), who discovers the *Stuff* "alive" in his fridge late one night. When his entire household is zombified after eating it, he goes on the run and crosses paths with private investigator David "Mr." Rutherford (Michael Moriarty), who is trying to figure out how and why the pale sludge has taken over the country's minds and bodies.

The lurking plot is essentially a string to hang gags and political barbs on: it's full of ideas, but threads in terms of character development, and requires a jolt from the molley cast, which includes Phil Sordis, Danny Aiello and Garrett Morris. Some, like Morris, have a ball with the material, while others fall flat in their roles.

The movie gets a real lift from its creative use of practical effects, showing the *Stuff* oozing from people's gaping mouths, onto walls, down toilets, etc. It also has a subversive willingness to change genres every few

scenes. Tossily, this means the movie is all over the map — sometimes it's a fun horror flick for kids, other times a corporate satire pitched for an older set. But *The Stuff* does a serviceable job at showing how a dubiously tested product, pushed by effective branding, quickly permeates a society that doesn't question what's on its grocery store shelves.

While not exactly "stuffed" with extras, there's a comprehensive making-of doc that deconstructs the film and the hunkies that a Larry Cohen shoot provided. *The Stuff* is by no means perfect, but the underlying message is as pertinent now as it was in the mid-'80s, or perhaps even more so, given that mass media's stronghold is tighter than ever.

JEFF STIMPINGAS

SLITHER ME TIMBERS...

SSSSSS (1973) *Revue*

Starring Christopher Martin, Eric Benedict and Heather Menzies
Directed by Ronald L. Kwakwaka
Written by Neil Crossen and Oswald C. Stimpingale
Shout! Factory

Anyone looking to sink their fangs into some wonderful trash needn't look further from the cobra transformation chiller *SSSSSS*, an obvious bit of snake oil from the creature feature resurgence of the 1970s. Sporting the frequent use of real serpents and elaborate snake makeup, this dopey throwback finally makes its Blu-ray debut from Shout! Factory in all its slippery, slithering glory.

Brother Martin plays Dr. Steer, a demented herpetolo-

gist who is conducting groundbreaking experiments with snakes on the captive farm he runs with his daughter Kristina (Heather Menzies). At the local college, the doc meets and hires promising student scientist David (Eric Benedict) to help him with the research. But when Steer puts his young protégé on a schedule of cobra venom injections — to help him develop immunity to the poison, he claims — David starts to experience an insatiable urge to slither around on his belly looking for field mice. This is troubling to his potential love interest Kristina, especially after she notices that the half-snake half-man at the county fair's sideshow looks a lot like her dad's previous assistant.

Before lending the job on *SSSSSS* ("Don't say it, I *hus* it," commands the film's poster), Kwakwaka had already loaned atomic-age B-flicks such as *Attack of the Giant Leeches* (1958). A sincere 1950s sensibility shows up here, as the movie unfolds in a way that's reminiscent of a classic poverty row mad doctor film, only with more notable production values. In particular, the scaly makeup by *Planet of the Apes* veteran Dan Striepeke (who also co-wrote) is a notch above expectations, reminiscent of a similar human-to-reptile makeover in *The Alligator People* (1959), a film to which *SSSSSS* owes much.

But don't expect this to be serious — Kwakwaka and company play up the far-fetched snake for maximum camp. In particular, future *Saturn* Galaxbar and *The A-Team* star Benedict portrays David as an obviously naive test subject



The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane

who doesn't get suspicious, even after he's turned completely green. This means there's little surprise in the final real revelation about Dr. Stoner's real motives, but by then there's been enough snake-related mayhem to satisfy most mad science monster movie devotees. While it almost certainly won't make your blood run cold, *Sessors* is still a tempting addition to Shout! Factory's line of horror classics (and less than classic).

PAUL CORIPE

BLOOD TIES

YOU'LL LIKE MY MOTHER (1972) DVDR

Starring Patty Duke, Rosemary Murphy and Sue Barbara Allen
Directed by Lamont Johnson
Written by Jo Wilton
Shout! Factory

Psychological thrillers and the '70s go together like peanut butter and jam. With atmospheric moodiness and a top-notch cast in its arsenal, Lamont Johnson's *You'll Like My Mother* is getting a well-deserved Blu-ray release from

Shout! Factory. Patty Duke stars as Francesca Kinsolving, the very pregnant widow of Matthew Kinsolving (who died in battle during the Vietnam War). She travels to Minnesota to meet her mother-in-law (Rosemary Murphy) for the first time, but upon arrival finds that the woman is not only short with her, but also eerily cold and suspicious, chipping off her marriage to Matthew and denying her future grandchildren. Francesca also accidentally meets Matthew's "fickle-minded" sister Kathleen (Sue Barbara Allen), even though her husband never mentioned any ob-

jects. Although Francesca's instincts tell her to leave, an impending snowstorm keeps her in the sprawling Kinsolving mansion, where she soon discovers that there are far worse things happening than she could have imagined, including identity theft and a prowling serial rapist (Richard Thomas, a.k.a. John Boy on *The Waltons*). The entire film has a layer of ice encasing it in an uncomfortable little package: the dead-eyed coldness of Rosemary Murphy's mother-in-law and the wintry backdrop outside of the Kinsolving mansion keep everyone captive. There's also the permeating feeling that everything is far from just a little in-law quirkiness. The script strays away from simply being a series of twists and turns, and offers its big reveal quite early on, before continuing with Francesca's mounting claustrophobia. This does make the movie feel quieter than most, and a bad choice for those looking for a quick and gory '70s monster!

Extras-wise, Shout! Factory has added photo stills and a trailer, plus a bonus feature with Allen and Thomas discussing their characters, which is charming, especially for Allen's explanation of how to perform using method acting (a technique that may not be familiar to most). *You'll Like My Mother* is a dusty but unique choice for lovers of '70s horror fare, with an unsettling dread that has kept it effective all these years.

RICHELLE CHAMKOT

JUST A SMALL TOWN GIRL

THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVES DOWN THE LANE (1976) Blu-ray

Starring Jade Parker, Scott Jacoby and Markin Stone
Directed by Nicholas Gessner
Written by Laird Koenig
Kino Lorber

Jade Parker's Oscar-nominated turn in 1976's *Taxi Driver* propelled her into stardom, but it's *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane*, released in the same year, that arguably features a more impressive performance from the actress.

A mixture of thriller and horror, this French Canadian production was based on screenwriter Laird Koenig's own novel. It has thirteen-year-old Rynn Jacobs (Parker) living in a New England village with her poet father, who's so reclusive no one ever sees him. Eventually, local pedophile Frank Hallett (Martin Sheen) pays Rynn a visit and makes his sleazy intentions clear. Sheen imbues Hallett with skin-crawling menace and although Rynn is a tough like, the threat of what might happen to her looms large.

Everyone knows about Frank's proclivities but due to his family's wealth and status, they look the other way. This aspect of *Little Girl* is terrifying, as is the bleak picture it paints of life as an outsider in a small town: Rynn's intellect and independence are a way for her to survive, but also a liability, as she incurs the wrath of Frank's busybody mother Mrs. Hallett (Alexis Smith).

Our protagonist finds a soulmate in fellow teen Mario (Scott Jacoby, *Bad Romance*) and confesses her secrets to him, such as what really happened to her father and what (or who) is hidden in the cellar. Here the film deals with teen sexuality in a frank, refreshing, yet non-exploitive manner.

The Kino Lorber release is a huge improvement from previous DVD versions, boasting a commentary track from director Nicholas Gessner, an on-camera interview with Gessner and Sheen, and more.

Although *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane* has far less blood than other similarly themed films of the time, it deserves a place in the horror canon for its prevailing atmosphere of dread, and that final, chillingly ambiguous close-up on Foster's face.

LESS LEE MOORE



THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE: *Splitting Hairs*

by Paul Corio

Even though conventional wisdom says that we should keep horror movies out of the hands of impressionable children, it's worth considering whether the genre — for all its nightmare-inducing frights and intensity — could be valuable for young ones. Kids, after all, probably face more fear and anxiety in their days than adults, and who wouldn't want a head start coping with those scary feelings? In fact, a handful of horror films such as *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* (1973) seem intended to help kids come to terms with confusing issues like parental conflict. Now an ill-fay from Shout! Factory, this widdling effort walks hand in hand the fuzzy line between family appeal and genuine scares.

Like other kid-friendly horrors, *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* is largely told through the eyes of a school-age prepubescent. With his parents in the midst of a divorce, Richie (Scott Scales) is spending the weekend visiting his father (Kenia Mathews). Out walking near their mansuicide retreat, both are startled when a werewolf jumps out of the woods and bites dear old dad. The sheriff (Robert J. Wilke) and child psychiatrist (George Gaynes) catchlight discuss Richie's far-fetched story, even as reports of headless bodies roll in from across the county. Things get particularly hairy when Richie's mother (Julie Barry) attempts a reconciliation despite her own indifference that his father and full means no longer mix. Only after a band of back-to-school Christians, led by Brother Christopher (screenwriter Bob Hornet), witness Richie's dad transform do the pieces start to fall together.

Director Nathan Juran frequently worked with Kenia Mathews over the years in kid-friendly fare (including the



tendency to also manifest emotional exuberance into physical incidents, teaching on fears about erratic or unpredictable parental behaviour. In the film, Richie's dad is a mostly compassionate character who, once bitten by the werewolf, seems to no longer be able to control his actions and grows distant from his son (while not explicitly mentioned, the movie implies that the family breakdown may be because Richie's dad is an alcoholic). Richie struggles to understand the shifting relationship throughout, exemplified in one particular scene in which the young boy is dropped off by his father and runs into his mother's house and slams his bedroom door, crying about how his father has "changed."

While his story is dismissed by most grown-ups, Richie's eerily brightness whenever there's a full moon junkie, oddly enough, seems to be just about every night in the film). Until others witness his dad's transformation and confirm Richie's worst fears, *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* actually provides a nuanced look at how children may conceal a fantasy around a painful concept as a coping mechanism.



Understand this way, it's not so far-fetched that a child would come up with a werewolf curse for mind-control devices or gorilla-like atom to invaders, for that matter) to explain why a parent has suddenly turned monstrous. After all, the horses at books and TV shows always know how to deal with killer werewolves and alien attacks.

In this way, *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* sets the tone for later child-oriented horror films, including *Phantom* (1976), *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983) and *The Sile* (1987), all movies that, in very different ways, deal with childhood fears about the death of a loved one. Although the film's sparse production values mean it can't match those later works, there are some things to recommend it, including Tom Burton's distinctive werewolf makeup, and some genuinely haunting concepts (even though the behind-the-scenes and cameos are kept entirely off screen).

So, while you should probably still keep these future cannibal castles and Gregory H. shockers safely on the top shelf, the occasional family-friendly horror film can help children exorcise themselves to frightening realities. Real life may not be so scary if we've already stared down vampires, ghosts and ghosts, and this confidence can be helpful as kids go through transformations that are even scarier than what Richie's dad went through — like becoming teenagers.

IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

Spiller Thriller

by John W. Bowen

I have many favourite diversions besides horror films. *Wretched Rayder*, and I've probably alluded to most of them in this column over the years: true crime documentaries, fart jokes, dangerous food, classical music and, until mortality nearly intervened a couple of years back, an appetite for alcohol that made John Barthman look like a fuckin' Baptist. But did I ever mention that I also love me some porn? 'Cause you'd best believe I do, although I'm pretty picky about it. In fact, my taste for the stuff is governed more by my dislikes than my likes, and among the stuff I wouldn't touch with my mortal's strap-on, there's that canous, one-notable pop-cultural footnote, the porn parody.

Edward Penabazinda, *Honey I Blew Everybody*, it's a Wonderful Sex Life, *ET*: the Extraterrestrial, *Masquerade* Position Impossible and gay near-classics *Shaving Ryan's Privates* and *Everybody Does Raymond*—sure, they're fun to name-drop at your next father-daughter purity ball, but can you actually imagine getting your top on to any of them? I myself cannot—irony makes me happy, but not horny—so really, what's the point? And there are plenty of XXX horror stories out there—*A Wet Dream on Elm Street*, anyone? *The Texas Kinship Massacre*? *Queen of the Mur-*



dered? [Can you guess which of those I made up?] But *Driller: A Sexual Thriller* has a bit more pure curiosity value going for it than... well, maybe it doesn't, but it's the one Dave Alexander tossed down the stairs to me in a plain brown envelope, so here comes the column.

Driller is ostensibly a hardcore takeoff on Michael Jackson's "Thriller" vid, at least for the first twenty minutes or so. We start out with '80s porn star Tripp Rice playing nerdy Louise, who attends a concert by Mr. J. (some sorry wet-head-



ed '80s gal who looks less like Jacko and more like an emaciated Rockwell). Left unattended by some catty post-concert sex with her darky boyfriend, Louise's fantasies take over.

Then things get interesting. Well, maybe that's too strong a word. After yet another painful dance number (juddy, there are several) Louise

gets rogered in her dreams by Mr. J, who transforms into a werewolf with a huge, spinning black acholing that speckles green jizz. Then we're off to Mr. J's sex dungeon to witness a largely unconnected series of sex scenes that range from untapped to, um, untapped but at least making a token effort. A guy in a *Toxic Avenger* mask (seriously) coaches a PVC-clad woman while she masturbates, some gal in a bridal gown gets dou-

ble-teamed by a pair of would-be goth dudes, a couple of gold-plated lesbians service each other with a glowing dildo and then there's an orgy. This would-be climax is on close as *Driller* gets to generating any real heat, although it's seriously derailed by a couple of guys in rubber American president masks (Nixon and Reagan—that's right, the sexy presidents) who boss out one-liners while they blow a few extras. And that's pretty much it. (Did I mention most of it takes place in a dungeon? Does that help? No?

Tripp Rice—a soft 'n' curvaceous type who might well have become a bigger star if she'd worked in the '70s—is the only recognizable performer in the cast, and also a member of that canous subgroup, Porn Actors Who Can Actually Sorta Act (seriously, they're not just an urban legend).

In the extras, producer Timothy Grease Backley, a virtual live cartoon of a skeezy snout merchant, relates some admittedly interesting anecdotes, though they're frequently undermined by lofty claims, including his assurance that the editor is now an Oscar winner who doesn't want his real name used (shocker, no?).

"We wanted to do the greatest adult parody of all time," he declares, adding, "I'm also one of the world's leading authorities on the paranormal in general and UFOs in particular." Hey, even in horror porn satire, it's all about the straight cred. And controversy. "One magazine published a spread and they were not allowed to send it to Canada, because the werewolf was considered bestiality." Oh Canada, indeed.

I'm sure *Driller* must float a few pans' boats, but if it's only given me a hanken' for some proper porn. To that end, I've just relocated that Sunny McKay compilation I made on VHS back in the '80s, so you'd best get the hell out of my basement while I have some "me" time. Unless you'd like to watch ♡

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27 Comics

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Roberto Aguirre-Solano
and Robert Hack
28 Comics

BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

by PEDRO CABEZUELO

The horror genre loves bone-chilling scenarios torn from the latest headlines. Stories based on real-life serial killers are nothing new, but the *Ed Gein* of the world are not the only source of real-world nightmares. For years, much of the planet has lived in fear of random terrorist attacks, and while many action movies and TV series such as *Homeland* and *24* explore the topic, few horror writers have tackled it.

Michael Moreci, however, decided to make the subject front and centre in his new comic series *Indoctrination* (Indoctrinationcomic.com). He is, after all, no stranger to political issues — his 2015 series *Burning Fields* took place in the Middle East and mixed geopolitics with Mesopotamian monster myths.

"After I finished *Burning Fields*, I felt compelled to try to find another way to tap into real-world horror and show, in a dramatic way, the nuances of global terror and death cults," he explains. "We're living in a frightening time, without question, and they're only getting more extreme in so many ways. I think it's the right moment to try to capture the spirit of our world through fiction."

In *Indoctrination*, a series of gruesome, ritualistic murders are linked to a terrorist waging an apocalyptic jihad. FBI agents Trent Daniels and George Torres are forced to work with disgraced ex-CIA agent Denton Wilkins in order to solve the case. Wilkins has ties to the mysterious death-cult leader, however, and may be loyal to him, potentially leading the agents into an elaborate trap.

"It's definitely a different type of horror, but I think it still retains that grain of classic horror-thrillers, from Hitchcock to *Silence of the Lambs* to [David] Fincher down to *True Detective*," says

Moreci. "You can consider this a socio-political serial killer procedural, which is a fairly established tradition. We're just taking the political route to add an element that hasn't been seen all that much before."

Alongside terrorism, the book also serves up murder, graphic violence and torture. And though it may lack the supernatural elements of Moreci's ghost-busting *House Murders* or the werewolf tale *Curse*, his approach didn't really differ from previous works.

"I think it's very similar to something like *Curse* or *Burning Fields*, in that much of the book's forward propulsion is found in the characters," he says. "The characters make these stories tick, they make them real and compelling, at least to me. And, especially in the case of *Curse* and *Burning Fields*, the story is tapping into real-world fears — these stories are very specific to our world, but because of the characters, they manage to be very personal at the same time."

In order to capture that real-world fear, Moreci turned to relative newcomer Matt Bataglia to handle the art. Bataglia has grounded the work with a rough, sketchy style that emphasizes the grubbiness of the characters. He's not afraid to play with artistic devices, taking advantage of double-page spreads, panel sizes and white borders to open up the book's scope and mirror some of the story's themes. His abstract representation of the unseen terrorist leader — a bare-chested man with a lion tattoo — makes for a striking visual.

"Matt's a risk-taker when it comes to his art," enthuses Moreci. "He's really doing some incredible and bold things with every issue, and



Indoctrination blends ritual murder with terrorism

he often finds subtle approach to the page has elevated the story in the best way."

Moreci does admit that when dealing with topics as volatile as terrorism, he is a bit more cautious in his writing. After all, while it's unlikely that readers will be offended by vampire or werewolf attacks, in a post 9/11 world, any handling of current issues may be held to higher scrutiny.

"We're talking about very sensitive subjects here," says Moreci. "I am comfortable admitting that I'm not an expert. I do my share of research to get things as right as I can, but I'm limited to my layman's knowledge. Plus, I don't want to sensationalize anything, or cheapen it. So, sometimes holding back is a must for the story so you don't find yourselves using these horrors as a device rather than a purpose."

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCABEZUELO

Stories set In the *Alien* universe tend to follow a familiar pattern: plug a small group of people down in a harsh or isolated environment, loose the xenomorphs, and watch the group get whittled down to a mere handful. Fundamentally, the only thing distinguishing these stories is the cast of characters, which makes it weird that they stand out. In *Alien: Defiance*, all eyes are on Private First Class Zula Hendricks, a space marine recovering from severe combat wounds and the only human on a team of synthetic soldiers investigating a derelict spaceship. Naturally, there he is: alien on board, and after the initial attack, Hendricks finds herself alive but suspicious of the synthetics and the ship's new captain. Hendricks is a great addition to the *Alien* cast—brave and headstrong, yet haunted by her life's choices. Surrounding her with a crew of artificial lifelines is a nice twist on the old formula of having one android in a sea of humans. Add some great art by Tristan Jones and you have a textbook example of how to keep a tried-and-true formula fresh and exciting.

I'm a bigger fan of the *Dungeons & Dragons* concept than of the game, so I tend to enjoy the various comic adaptations. They're also a better showcase for the franchise's horror elements, as evidenced by the latest issue, *Dungeons & Dragons: Shadows of the Past*.



The usual crew of D&D avatars—thief, ranger, dwarf, sorcerer—are caught in the middle of a feud between a group of vengeful and a religious cult that worships

spacehips and angry little green men swimming the planet, destroying people and places willy-nilly. It's just as satisfying to witness the consequences of said conquest. *Mini-Attacks* Deception #2 gives us another glimpse into a world ruled by our Martian overlords, with particular emphasis on Ruby Johnson, member of a Tarran resistance group captured by the aliens and forced to fight in a deadly arena. Ruby slices and dices her way through Martians, cyborgs and other mannequin-like, serving renders a generous portion of blood and guts with a side helping of the usual *Mini-Attacks* dark humor.



Doctor Who has always had a strong link to horror, but typically the comic adaptations tend to

Kalevala, God of the Dead. But this is no mere pack of man-beasts; they are servants of Count Strahd Von Zarovich, the Lord of Ravensloft, the realm of eternal night into which our heroes are plunged. Along with well-loved, readers are treated to an army of skeleton warriors—and hints of greater evils waiting in the shadows. *Avatars* they may be, but they're fun as protagonists; the highlight being ranger Mace and his pet homler Bao, ported over from the *Batla's Gate* video game. The lighter elements don't detract from the monster mayhem, either. There's plenty of carnage here, with a strong promise of more to come.



One of my favorite aspects of IDW's *Mini-Attacks* comics is the time spent examining life on Earth under Martian occupation. While it's always fun to see

ling salsa sees the Doctor and Sarah Jane tangle with giant cyclopes and a mysterious veiled woman who can turn people to stone. Artist Brian Williams takes full advantage of the tale's Victorian England setting to ratchet up creepiness, gothic aspects, with plenty of shadows and fog-strewn settings. Finally, a *Doctor Who* comic that kids can read behind the sofa!

For those who think *Archie* with Archie is too light-hearted there's *Gothic Adventures of Sabrina*, a book so dark it's a wonder the titular witch has managed to retain her platinum

blonde hair. After the murder of her boyfriend, Harvey Kinkle, at the hands of her coven, Sabrina decides to bring him back to life—with the help of sorceress Madame Satan and oblivious neighbors Betty and Veronica. But Sabrina isn't aware that Satan is behind all her troubles, including Harvey's death, and the resurrection comes with unexpected and potentially deadly results. Unlike some other Archie horror tales, none of the shocks are played for laughs and the book never shies away from showing the consequences of the characters' actions, making this one of the most affecting, uncompromising, and accessible horror comics on the market.



THE NINTH CIRCLE BOOKS

SOMETHING WICKED: A GHOST HUNTER EXPLORES NEGATIVE SPIRITS

Debi Chestnut
Liverpool

Regardless of whether one falls on the Scully or the Mulder end of the believer spectrum, paranormal investigations remain a fascinating subject when in the right hands. Accounts of evil spirits in our world tend to favour non-visual media, and the Love-podcast or the works of Charles Fort are gripping for skeptics and believers alike, while TV series such as *Ghost Hunters* are about as far as a layman can go. In these cases, the truth behind paranormal matters is often a secondary concern to the storytelling.

Something Wicked: A Ghost Hunter Explores Negative Spirits is the latest from Debi Chestnut, an author and ghost hunter whose works include *Is Your House Haunted?*, *5 Reasons Your Home May Be Haunted* and *How To Clean Your Home of Ghosts and Spirits*. While those books covered a specific subject to the point of repetition, here Chestnut expands on her familiar haunts (spoody pun intended) to examine possession, unexplained injuries and yet more haunted houses.

Even recycled anecdotes can make for gripping reading from a successful storyteller, but *Something Wicked* is downright snore, giving little beyond the canny info on its subjects. Why devote sections of the book to demonic activity, the history of exorcism in Catholicism or the true story behind *The Possession of Emily Rose* if the reader can get more information on all those things from a quick Google? Chestnut's work is neither a memoir, nor a descriptive overview of spirits and how ghost hunters like her deal with them. And if this generic approach was an attempt to appeal to younger readers, why is there no exploration of EVPs or Ghost Boxes or how they're used in paranormal research?

Chestnut explores the types of ghosts, evil entities and mysterious energies with all the depth of a Wikipedia entry. In fact, anyone with an interest in spectral activity would be better

off reading about it there, since most Wikipedia pages have a list of cited sources that provide links to more information. Reading *Something Wicked*, you almost expect to find "This article is a stub. You can help by expanding it." inscribed on the final page.

ADAM CLAPKE

ALMOST INSIDENT, ALMOST DIVINE

D.P. Watt

Underline Publications

There are both gains and glass beads among the stories in *Almost Insistent, Almost Divine*.

The book is the third collection from the British author D.P. Watt, after *An Enchirionium of Auburna* (2013) and *The Phantasmagorical Imperative and Other Fabrications* (2014). It collects his recent stories from small press anthologies and obscure publications and further emphasises his fascination with the world of masques, carnivals and theatres. His stories are indebted to the European fantastic literature of the 19th and early 20th century (E.T.A. Hoffmann, J.K. Huysmans, Arthur Schnitzler, Alfred Jarry) with a bit of "the new weird" to connect it to contemporary trends.

For example, there's a tale here about a man looking for the book with answers for all the mysteries of life ("*At the Sign of the Burning Leaf*"), which he eventually finds in *The History of Little Fanny*, an ancient children's book. Then there's the sexual awakening of a newlywed couple in a countryside cottage, which is seemingly enhanced by residual pagan forces in "*Honey Moon*." A puppeteer is unwilling to compromise his craft in "*With Gravelly Grace*" and in "*The Mechanised Eccentric*," the theatre is a force of literal insurrection of the human form when

to a Christmas party and the creatures who turn him into one of them.

Almost Insistent, Almost Divine contains shades of Thomas Ligotti, with whom Watt shares the puppet motif and the notion of life as a dark masquerade in which costumed actors are playing the parts expected of them, regurgitating the same lines in a tired voice that has long since ceased to be their own. However, his stories occasionally tend to be allusive and whimsical to the point of frustrating obscurity (as in "*Mr Egare*," about a bureau owned by the aforementioned Machery). This release can be rewarding, no doubt, but requires a patient reader attuned to the type of ambiguous, nightmarish whimsy that colour these stories.

DEJAN DONJANDIC

SECURITY

Gene Weildorff
Alpenhorn Books

To quote The Police, "I'll be watching you..." It's an appropriate lyric for *Security*, a novel that takes place in a swanky new hotel called Menderley. Barely finished, its creator Charles Deatin plans to host an opening gala in its prestigious ballroom, forcing manager Tessa to work around the clock and make many of her staffers live on site 'til the big party. However, a week before the opening, a masked killer infiltrates the building and starts picking off staff members one by one.

On the surface, this book seems like your run-of-the-mill slasher story, and in many respects it is, but there are a few intriguing ideas here that help keep it afloat. The most ingenious is a first-person narrator whose identity is kept secret from the reader. And the fact that this narrator is getting his or her information through the hotel's security cameras, and Weildorff brings an additional layer of mystery and unease to an already brutal story. All this begs the question: is our narrator complicit in these crimes or just a powerless watcher?

The novel does falter in some respects, though. The most blatant being the decision to give Tessa a love interest in the form of her foster brother, who just





The William Shatner mask made famous in *Halloween*



ness.

In the end, *Security* disappoints when wrapping up its mysteries, especially because they'd been built up so cleverly. Still, I'm interested to see where Wolskooff goes from here, as she clearly has talent. She just needs to try a little harder at making her stories her own.

BRETT MCNEILL

THE BYE BYE MAN AND OTHER STRANGE-BUT-TRUE TALES

Robert Damon Schneek
Torrey Pines

We've all heard the one about the couple parked in the woods while a murderous man with a hook for a hand is at large, or what happens when you say Bloody Mary three times into a bathroom mirror, but have you heard about the Bye Bye Man?

According to Robert Damon Schneek, author of *The Bye Bye Man and Other Strange-but-True Tales*, this "wide-brimmed hat"-wearing albino clad in "something that looked like a pea coat" was a mass murderer with psychic abilities whose existence was revealed to three paranormal explorers by reluctant spirits via a Ouija board. It could be true, or so Schneek would love for us to believe.

Previously published in 2005 under the title *The President's Vampire: Strange-but-True Tales of the United States*, Schneek's book consists of a variety of spooky stories that have an alleged ring of truth to them, with the tale of the Bye Bye Man being the most contemporary and longest. However, while the book offers up interesting anecdotes of centuries-old spooky Americans,



DANTE'S PICK



BAD CLOWNS

Benjamin Radford

University of New Mexico Press

In the introduction to *Bad Clowns*, author Benjamin Radford states that, "I myself harbor no particular love nor fear or hatred of clowns, whether kind or noos; this book is not an attempt to examine clowns as media icons or as cultural phobias." Well, how pleasant it would have been for Radford to explore all manner of these facepainted fiends, from folklore to pop-culture, without flashbacks of being forced to sit on a clown's lap at a classmate's birthday party!

Divided into thematic chapters broaching topics such as early clowns, comic book clowns and clowns on film, *Bad Clowns* offers a very diverse look at the entertainers. Each subject is explored with the thoughtfulness of an academic who hasn't forgotten people might actually want to read this stuff one day. Radford's explanation of famed kiddie puppet show *Runch and Judy*, for example, starts with a simple description of the material itself, followed by a critical analysis that is both insightful and satisfying. After all, this was a play about a clown who murders his crying baby, the cop who comes to investigate, and anyone else who criminals as much as a mild annoyance against them, including the Angel of Death. And this was for children!

Because Radford handsly dissects the topic with wit and enthusiasm, it's not hard to make the leap into subsequent chapters involving Freddy Krueger, John Wayne Gacy and Flavor Flav. For every clown that will no doubt be familiar to everyone — among them, The Joker and Ronald McDonald (a photo of an early incarnation portrayed by Willard Scott is truly upsetting!) — we get writing on activist pranksters such as The Yes Men, Mervin Conner's Obnoxious, and the Marx Salvatrucha, a 70,000-member criminal gang whose facial tattoos are designed to resemble clowns. There's even a chapter devoted to calypsothea, the scientific term for the extreme fear of clowns. If you've ever wondered why no one has ever seen Billy Bob Thornton, Johnny Dapp or Sean "Puffy" Combs in the same room as a clown, now you know.

Radford, whose previous works include books on the chameleons and lake monsters, has another fascinating tome on his hands. But unlike the crypto-creatures who hang out in the periphery of real-life, clowns are always, and have always been, around us. It's their intention and malice that are the mystery, and *Bad Clowns* offers a broad and thorough insight into what makes them tick. And squint. And split.

TAL ZIMMERMAN

AT THE EDGE COLLECTS SOME OF NEW ZEALAND'S BEST HORROR AND SPECULATIVE FICTION AUTHORS INTO ONE DARK AND DIVERSE BOOK

HAUNTING THE LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD

BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

WE'RE LIVING IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE - THAT'S AN IDEA THAT'S BEEN POUNDED INTO US SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF THE INTERNET. AND WHILE IT MAY BE TRUE WHEN IT comes to telecommuting and sharing experiences on social media, borders still exist in the world of art and literature, often the result of language barriers or just the sheer remoteness of certain places.

"The distance is one [of our biggest challenges]," confirms New Zealand-based author/editor Lee Murray. "We're on the arse end of the world down here. The first stop to anywhere is three hours away by plane ... Because of the time involved, and the cost of travel, we're not on the top of anyone's list for invitations to book expos or writers' conventions. ... This means our writers lack visibility, and hence discoverability, by the publishers and agents who might help us gain a wider readership for our work."

Of course, the genre is known for finding ways to thrive in remote and/or unwelcoming places, and that's certainly true of New Zealand, which is also known as *Aotearoa*, or the Land of the Long White Cloud, by the native Maori. Just because North American readers haven't heard of many of the country's horror writers, doesn't mean they aren't producing quality work - in fact, they're a rather close-knit bunch, with membership in the country's genre writers' organization, SpecFicNZ, topping 200.

"It's widely accepted that New Zealand has its own brand of gothic horror: Kiwi Gothic," explains Murray, "which, according to academic Ian Carmichael, is derived from a sense of 'isolation, loss, and despair, of a rugged, wild, and treacherous land that can assault and entrap. Kiwi Gothic reveals a post-entire society that appears unable to settle.' It is this sense, this pervasive sense of danger that conditions much of our writing."

One need look no further than the new anthology *At the Edge* (just now from Paper Road Press, one of the country's several small presses) to

find the truth in that statement. The anthology contains 25 stories from names pretty much guaranteed to not be on your radar, but who deserve to be. While it offers up a variety of horror and science fiction narratives, darkness, endings and life on the brink are constant, unifying themes, from Philip Mann's "The Architect," which sees a man complete his life's work only to die within it, to Marie Lileigh's "Boring Day," in which a young woman attempts to avenge her twin brother's murder (at the hands of their father) during the family's annual *Ripit* Club-steps event.

"The balance [between horror and science fiction] was intended, it was what we'd hoped to achieve when we crafted the call for submissions," notes Murray. "The reason wasn't sophisticated - we like both genres ... Horror fiction examines all points on the spectrum of fear, from unsettling and uncomfortable right through to what Sarah dragons blogger Matthew Summers describes as 'yethies-bleeding' terror, and editor Stephen Jones calls 'eye-balls on a plate.' Science fiction allows us so many opportunities to elicit those fears in our readers: alien invasions spawned through genetic manipulation, alien DNA (DNA not originating on Earth) deposited via meteors, climate change catastrophes, wormholes, gravity wave detectors. The options are endless. And, happily, scientists are creative too, continually delving up innovative material for horror writers to exploit through story."

While reading an anthology that represents both genres evenly without necessarily combining them may seem strange to North American audiences who are blessed with an abundance of specialized collections, the mix of stories in *At the Edge* proves to have an almost palate-cleansing effect. For instance, one can recover from unnering body horror transformation tales such as "The Uprig" and "Hood of Bone" with the quieter chills of "12-36," which concerns a mysterious showboy child who is discovered by the captain of a crippled spaceship just as things become absolutely dire.

In short, it's well worth a trip to the edge. **B**



including alleged hauntings and vamps, none of the tales are particularly scary, especially since the author makes a point of uncovering the most logical explanations for these supposed excursions into the paranormal. Chapters such as *The God Machine* and *Unleash the Dead*—the former about an alleged creation of a new mechanical god, and the latter a tantalizing history of charlatan mediums—will keep you reading, but they won't keep you up at night. By the time you get to the final chapter, it all feels a little dry and anti-climactic.

History buffs may find much to enjoy in *The Bye Bye Man* And Other Strange-But-True Tales, but audiences looking for goosebumps from the shiver bequeymer are more likely to find them in the upcoming cinematic adaptation of the story.

ANDY BURNS

PIECES OF HATE

A WHISPER OF SOUTHERN LIGHTS

Tim Lebbon

TOR

"Death rode out of the desert on a pale horse."

The opening line of *Dead Man's Heart's* novella in *Pieces of Hate* serves as a fittingly foreboding introduction to our supernatural protagonist Gabriel as he moves into the gold rush town of Dead Wood in the 1880s. Gabriel is the central character of *Pieces of Hate*, *Dead Man's Heart* and *A Whisper of Southern Lights*—a series of largely novella-length stories by Tim Lebbon, which tell of Gabriel's centuries-long fight with the demon called Temple.

The books follow no strict chronology in Gabriel's timeline. *Pieces of Hate* concerns an encounter between the two during the golden age of piracy, while *Southern Lights* takes place in WWI Singapore as the immortal race through the jungle for a vital clue that could end their struggle. Through various flashbacks, we learn more about Gabriel in 19th-century Wales and how his fate became entwined with Temple's.

Somewhat surprisingly, Lebbon changes up the narrator from book to book. In *Pieces of Hate*, Gabriel's story is told by a shopkeeper named Doug; in *Dead Man's Heart* Gabriel himself takes over storytelling duties, and in *Southern Lights* the narration is split between him and a soldier named Sykes. Having a variety of narrators gives Lebbon the opportunity to broaden our knowledge about the war and allows readers to witness the conflict from both an insider and an outsider's perspective.

Lebbon is at his best when writing action sequences, particularly the gripping battles between Gabriel and Temple, and describing horrific situations, such as how Gabriel bleeds from his old wounds and empty eye socket whenever he gets close to the demon. Descriptive horror, however, does not build character, despite the inclusion of several passages concerning Gabriel's gutting sadness and overwhelming hate, an emotion he feeds by reliving the slaughter of his village and family at the hands of Temple. So, while a pair of immortals fighting through the centuries is an intriguing concept for an epic clash between good and evil, the leads lack dimension. One is on a quest for revenge, the other's a homicidal villain motivated by chaos—thus they never seem to be an active part of the time period depicted. As a result, there is little to stake here for either of them—or the readers.

BRENTON BENTZ



LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

Are you a fan but also a creator? Have you ever wished conventions were a little less about buying things and more about making your horror craft?

Well, it turns out StokerCon is dedicating itself to putting a new spin on the old book con concept by making its conventions weekend a bona fide learning experience for horror writers, both amateurs and professionals alike.

This year's event, held May 12 to 15 at the Flamingo hotel in Las Vegas, still had everything you'd expect from a more traditional con: There were the famous panels, including authors R.L. Stine (at Reservations library), Jack Ketchum (*The Girl Next Door*, *The Warning*), Anne Saffell (daughter of Twilight Zone creator Rod Serling) and award-winning editors Stephen Gold and Erik Seltzer, as well as readings, Q&A, panel discussions (such as *The Power Of Writers Group And Peer Critiques* and *YA horror: How It's Done*), autograph sessions and parties. But StokerCon also built in an interactive educational component in the form of Horror University, a series of two-hour "hands-on" workshops that saw authors teaching the tricks of the trade to up-and-comers, and not just about writing fiction itself. There were also classes on how to read your work on stage and how to adapt fiction to screenplays. I popped into Nancy Holder's *How To Write Scary* and Tim Waggoner's *Build A Better Monster*, while the latter seemed geared more to writers beginning their horror careers. Waggoner's left my head exploding with new monster concepts/approaches to try in my own fiction (such as the rather interesting concept of reworking a popular trope in order to create a fresh creature from an old standby, such as vampire that "infests" folklore into its victims).

But StokerCon wasn't just educational. It backed up its schooling with a chance to put that learning to the test via its pitch sessions. Attendees could sign up to pitch stories for five- to ten-minute talks with agents, publishers, production companies, and even years truly, who were seeking content for *Run Amok*. (Sign up 9 for a *Storelines* pitch hour from a pitch that made the cut.)

And some of StokerCon 2016 was just plain fun, notably the *Three Stoker Awards Banquet and Ceremony*, and Stoker's two-hour reading and Q&A, during which he shared some of his favorite and funniest fan mail (which could be summed up as "feds ask the damned things").

In these years of attending horror fan events, StokerCon feels like the first show to really put professional development front and center. So if you dream of writing scary stories, you'll want to book a ticket on the haunted Duran library in Long Beach, California, where next year's con will be held, because until there's an honest-to-god real Horror University, this is as close as you're gonna come.

JENNIFER L. SKEGGER



The 2016 Stoker Awards Banquet (R-L) features Torrey Hoxley, Alex Arns, Stephen Barr, and two unidentified attendees.

THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: ABIGAIL LARSON'S LOVELY CREATURES

Ron Morgan's *Dark Carnival* is upon us, and amongst the guests is illustrator Abigail Larson. Hailing from Virginia, her art looks like what might happen if Maurice Sendak, Tim Burton and Walt Disney hopped into a time machine and went back to paint portraits of Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft. She cites Golden Age illustrators such as Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Edward Gorey as influences, and it's easy to see why – there's a classical quality to her work, which also includes sculpture. Her first solo show was hosted by the Poe Museum, she's published three books (a fourth one is coming in November) and has been nominated for Best Illustrator honours at the 2016 Hugo Awards. In short, you'll be seeing a lot more from her.

What was the image or story that inspired you to get into horror?

One of the first books I ever owned was a little pocket Poe book that included "The Black Cat," which both terrified and enthralled me. I read all of Poe's poems and short stories at an early age, and really haven't taken out of love with them. I picked up every gothic novel I could find and found a home in the dark, dusty, ghost-like worlds they created.

There's a very classic nostalgia element to your style. Do work mostly traditionally or digitally?

Both, actually. I've never been happy with my digital art or my paintings, so I found a marriage between the two mediums that I like. I love the clean, flat, precise colours I get with digital colouring, but I like to draw on paper. And there's really no digital substitute for watercolour painting. So I mash them all up until I get the effect I want.



Your statue collaborations with Michael Leonskis are incredible. Do you supply him with multiple angles and additional sketches or does he just use your finished illustrations as reference?

He approached me about collaborating, and being a fan of his work myself, I knew he'd do a wonderful job handling my characters. With the Hsu and Leonskis sculptures, I think I just gave him front and back views, and he took care of the rest.

You've also published several books. Whose universe is toughest to visualize, Lovecraft or Poe's?

Lovecraft's world is trickier because there's so much fantasy involved, and much of it is widely open to interpretation... Poe is a little easier because it's always gothic horror set in a single time period.

Check out more of Larson's work at abigail-larson.com and etsy.com/shop/bailemontecro, and meet her at the Dark Carnival July 9-10.



Photo: Michael Leonskis

Jim Jefferies Alex Williamson Greg Fleet

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THE GORE MET

MENU: A TASTE FOR GANG VIOLENCE

Found-footage films are relatively inexpensive to produce and, as *The Blair Witch Project* (1996), *Paranormal Activity* (2009) and *Cloverfield* (2008) proved, can be financially lucrative. Beyond the multiples, found-footage films are abundant in the underground horror scene, from *Whorecore* to *The Jungle* (2007) and *Long Pigs* (2007) to *August Underground* (2001) and *Snuff 152* (2007). *Mean Streets* (1992) is generally considered the first bona fide found-footage horror film, but there was an earlier example made the year before (though released the year after) that through poor distribution had been lost to the mists of time: Camp Motion Pictures, in conjunction with Cinecine/VHS film magazine editor Josh Schafer, have resurrected Jack Perez's *America's Deadliest Home Video* (1992) horror history to being reventant! At least by the...

Then-bickled bedfellow and former *Partridge Family* star Danny Bonaduce stars as amiable son-of-a-bitch Dougie, an overzealous home video enthusiast obsessed with documenting his life on 16-9 tape. When Dougie—and his camera—catch his wife having sex with another man, he abandons his romance for the open highway and documents his cross-country journey in a roadside video journal. While at a dilapidated rock quarry relating a droll anecdote about his father, he inadvertently records a trio of petty criminals pushing a stolen car into the yawning chasm behind him. Instead of killing him, the Bonke and Clyde-inspired crooks—Clint Dwyer (Rick Wylkoff), his moll Gloria (Melina Walters) and trigger-happy benchwoman Wozza (Madonna Williams)—bait Dougie footage to videotape their suburban crime spree. Dougie transforms from captive to reluctant participant in their rolling wave of convenience-store robberies and wretched violence.

Made in 1991 for the \$7000 producer Wylkoff was able to put on his credit card, America's Deadliest Home Video was designed to cash in on



the then-popular direct-to-video rental market. Wylkoff partnered with Perez, who also wrote the script, to get a shot-on-video feature out and kick-start their movie careers. Perez considered the limitations of the format and carefully crafted a film that plays best to consumer-grade video equipment. The entire movie is shown from the perspective of Dougie's camera, so in order to maintain a veneer of reality, there is one angle and one take, with the camera turned on and off between each scene. Long bits, like the five capsule-moment video store robbery, play out in real time. Amongst this is a bunch of gunshot gore effects done on the fly, including a particularly gruesome face blast accomplished with face paint.

A botched VHS release two years later resulted in about a hundred tapes making it out into the wild, the film never attracted the attention it deserved. However low budget, it's solid work with strong performances that benefits from a strict adherence to the inherent conceit. Camp Motion Pictures gives it just what it due on a DVD that includes individual commentary tracks with Perez and Wylkoff, the official trailer and a wealth of trailers for other Camp Video releases. Highly recommended to all SDV and VHS fans!

Crews, specifically the act of murder, also plays a significant role in Karlo Spiller's low-budget

lynchings slow-burner *Sheep Skin* (2012), out now from gloriously revived Uncut Gems.

Todd (Laurence Mallory) is a bony businessman who's drugged and kidnapped at the end of his workday by a quartet of pig-mask-wearing assailants. He's taken to an anonymous warehouse to be interrogated about his involvement in the savage murder of the sister of the gang's leader, Schafer (Michael Schenck). Schafer is convinced that Todd is also responsible for the death of another woman, and is a winnow! Facing six silver bullets, bloodied beatings and a lust for revenge, Todd is given until the full moon rises to confess why his role renders he may be responsible for.

While there are moments that are clumsy and drawn out in order to maintain the moody one-room conceit of the film, its an otherwise shrewd gambler that calculates as a satirically violent and head-nodded climax (that includes gags as the credits, as watch them through). The snail-but strong cast is up to the challenge of the claustrophobic setting, there is some cool gore, and pork is well-used in the soundtrack. Other than that, there are bulk ovals and black and white wardrobe and a pile of worthy extras on the DVD. But watch 'em first, as you want to venture into the particular over lighteningly unpleasant.





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LISTEN TO MY NIGHTMARE

In BMF151 we covered Canadian murder ballad revivalists Murder Murder, who dug into Northern Ontario's sordid history for lyrical inspiration. Now, a new project called **American Murder Song** by Terrance Zoulich and Saar Hendelstein, the composers behind cult music vids *Ripper: The Genetic Opera* and *The Devil's Carnival*, explores the murder ballad south of the border. The mysterious **American Murder Song** is a multi-faceted project comprised of a series of EPs including *Gone* (released in May), *Providence* (released in June), and a third due in July, and a touring musical whose dates should be announced this month. There are also a series of YouTube videos, which hint at a film version. I caught up with Zoulich and Hendelstein to learn more.

How would you describe American Murder Song to the uninitiated?

TZ: AMS is a collection of original murder ballads set in 1916 America. The project combines all of the epic, world-building musical elements of film with the intimacy of story line around a campfire... a campfire under attack by satives, the brutal elements of the American frontier, and by members of our camp (who have) hungry eyes and blackened souls.

What attracted you to explore the murder ballad?

SH: Murder ballads present such a rich environment for us to play around in. There's conflict, blood, tragedy (comedy when your humour is as black as ours), as well as a real sense of history and lore... As opposed to fairy tales or other types of story traditions, these aren't merely tales, they're scary-as-f--- tales.

In May you announced that Sara Taylor from The Birthday Massacre is featured in AMS. What other names will be involved?

SH: On the killer side, we have Sara, Aunio Voltaire and Alesia White-Gluz of the death metal band Arch Enemy. TZ: We also got to work with Scotty Morris of Big Red Voodoo Society, who produced the music for our EPs. He also plays a role as a member of AMS's The Reckoning, a spooky quartet of "murder" dancing pilgrims.

Were you inspired by any specific murder ballads or true crime stories?

TZ: *Providence*, our second EP, features a ballad about Lavinia Fisher, a historical figure who is purported to be America's first female serial killer. SH: Lavinia is our answer to Jack the Ripper. You've got a brutal killer of prostitutes... We've got a steady-eyed, highway-robber, killer badass who serves you a glass of ale at her tavern before showing you to your room for the night. And she's a lady! That's how things got done in the American frontier.

What conflicts exist between AMS and RIPPER: Devil's Carnival?

SH: *Carnival* plays out as a grand conflict: Lucifer vs. God. With AMS, while the canvas is really sprawling, it's much more intimate and human. It's tragedy on a small scale viewed under the biggest microscope we could find.

JACOB WOLF LEPTON

types" and when closer "Lord of Death" ramps up the sonic doom 'n' gloom, creating an atmosphere of nihilistic rage that feels absolutely authentic. With *Slaves for Satan*, Gensler shows it's still covered in the blood of its enemies, setting the world ablaze, and having more fun than anyone. **B.B.B.B. 1/5 JS**



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Emergence From Beyond
Unconscious Movement

Everything old is new again, and nowhere is that more apparent than in the old school death metal scene. Featuring buzz-saw guitar riffs — played exclusively through the Boss HM-2 heavy metal pedal, of course — matched with guttural vocals describing all things grim and gory, Dutch deviants Rotten Casket wear Damocles and Asphyx influences (and probably garb) prominently on their bloody sleeves. *Emergence From Beyond* gathers all the material from Rotten Casket's previous two (excellent) only demos, and it should serve the needs of any OSDM diehard. While there are plenty of bands doing the same thing at the moment, what sets Rotten Casket apart is superior musicianship and unrelenting energy. They may slow things down to a zombie dirge occasionally ("In Search of the Perfect Skin," "Tangled in Gore") but the majority of *Emergence From Beyond* is an unrelenting death metal hammer to the skull. **B.B.B.B. CR**



THE VISION BLEAK

The Unknown
Pleasure Productions

After fifteen years spent in relative obscurity, celebrating the mainstream in folkies, fishes and film,

Bowling's The Vision Bleak turns the page on its previous history via a new album and label, hopefully bringing it some richly deserved attention. In place of past odds to The Fog or The Extinct, they've set their sights on a more general audience with death and beyond in songs such as "Spirits of the Dead," "The Whore of the Cemetery Hound" and "How Deep Lies Torture." Bridging the gap between Moonspell and Demomel's gloomily melodic late-'80s European metal, goth/metal is a Type C Negative (particularly in the vocal department) and the plaintive earnestness of melodic is a tall order, but somehow The Vision Bleak makes it work seamlessly. It's worth noting that Pleasure Productions has also released a compilation of past material titled *Timeline: An Introduction to The Vision Bleak*. May these guys remain The Unknown no longer. **B.B.B.B. GT**



ZOMBIE RITUAL/TERMINATION FORCE

Zombie Termination

Horror Fan Guts Death Productions. Obviously taking zombies very seriously, *Zombie Ritual* references the word in every one of the song titles on offer here. Expressing the band's maniacal love of video thrash, we're treated to the grim "1916 Zombie Moves," the black metal-tinged "March of the Zombies," the manic percussive bathos of the aptly-titled "Zombie Drums of Death" and the subtle apocalyptic "Zombie Jesus on the Cross." Okay, perhaps they don't take zombies that seriously. Taking things even less seriously is *Termination Ritual*, which despite its loss of old school gothical grand (they close with a cover of Napalm Death's classic "Scum") drums out discs such as "Bloodbath and Beyond" and "Trail of Entrails." So crack a can, enjoy the good times, and throw *Zombie Termination* on — by the end of its 38:25 duration, you and your friends should almost be done arguing about whether to watch *Re-Zombinator*. **Dead Alive!** **B.B.B. GT**

WITH THE UNEXPECTED GLENN DANZIG REUNION SHOWS IN THE WORKS AND A NEW SLASHER MOVIE-INSPIRED EP, THE MISFITS ARE LOOKING TO KILL IT OLD SCHOOL

FIENDS NEVER DIE

by LARRY FINE

BY THE TIME YOU'RE READING THIS, THE BIGGEST ANNOUNCEMENT IN MISFITS HISTORY HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE: after decades of legal battles, rancor, swears, ruckuses and speculation, the band's comic vocalist and songwriter Glenn Danzig will reunite with original bassist Jerry Only and its most famous guitarist Doyle (Only's brother) for the first time in 33 years. But before those shows take place this September in Denver and Chicago, Only has some horror business of his own, namely a new EP on Misfits Records, titled *Friday the 13th*.

"I was originally planning on putting together an album to be released in August, coinciding with a live show in Transylvania," explains Only, who has been leading the band on vocals since 2001. "But when we confirmed the reunion shows for the September, I realized that would have been way too close and distracting. We took four songs that were almost done and finished them to create this EP, 'Friday the 13th' being the title track."

The track was released digitally with pre-orders on Friday, May 13 with the full four-song EP out June 17, and available on limited colour vinyl that month. While the Misfits are known for their B-horror-inspired lyrics and image, movies took on an even greater focus when Only reformed the band sans Danzig in the late '90s, with a specific film making up nearly every song title and chorus. Long-time followers have likely been chasing a Jason Voorhees anthem for some time now.

"We already had some great artwork of a Fiend Skull hockey mask hybrid, and John [Calkins], my manager, had been encouraging me to write a song called 'Friday the 13th' for a while," explains Only.

The hockey mask/Fiend Skull mashup comprises the artwork on the EP, and '80s slasher devotees will be pleased to see another familiar face on the back of the album: Freddy Krueger - in the guise of the Misfits mascot, of course.

"At the time, I had no idea my manager already had art for it by Jeff Zornow finished and lying in wait! When I played John the first rough mix of

'Ben Street' he showed me the art and I was blown away by how great it was... This was actually the night before we had the meeting with Glenn that led to the reunion."

Ah yes, the reunion. As the story goes, Only and Danzig had a meeting in January 2016 to discuss their ongoing disputes. Though the details are still unagreed, they ended up settling all of their issues and came to the conclusion that combining their strengths would be beneficial to both parties, and more importantly, the fans.

"It was destiny," says Only. "We are doing two reunion shows as the 'Original Misfits' this September at Rock Fest in Denver and Chicago, I think it's going to be incredible, and we'll see what path comes of it."

But the biggest question on most minds is the reunion's sustainability. The bitter legal battles between both parties have left wallets and egos bruised, so to reform seems like a challenge to say the least. Moreover, most see Danzig as the "true" Misfit, as the brainchild and only songwriter behind the original punk band's brilliant three-chord numbers such as "Last Caress," "Skulls" and "I Turned into a Marine." Without Danzig's unique vocals, no one would be talking about the Misfits today. On the other hand, Only has operated as band leader and kept them alive through various incarnations for the last twenty years, much longer than the band's original 1977 to 1983 lifespan. Yet Only insists both parties have the right attitude to make it work.

"When we started we were all very young and still developing our skills and musicianship. After over three decades of working independently of each other, we've really honed our skills. It's like an all-star team now, and we will sound better than we ever would have, or could have, back then. Together we will ease the bar and set the standard for what a band should be. The sound was very raw in the beginning because I didn't have to sing. Singing limits my mobility and if I had to wear a hoodies that would make me Madonna, which is not our style. [Laughs] With Glenn at the helm, I just have to put enough mics around so I can close enough to sing at all times. I can't wait."





HEARTHSTONE: WHISPERS OF THE OLD GODS

PC, Mac, iPhone, iPad, Android

Blizzard

If you haven't tried *Hearthstone*, the free-to-play, Warcraft-themed online collectible card game from Blizzard, the stars are finally aligned for you to join the battle. *Whispers of the Old Gods* is the latest 134-card expansion to the game, which plays a lot like *Magic*. The gathering it delivers is Lovecraftian-styled *Azoth* (the main setting of *Mitford*) along with four legendary Old God cards.

The set-up: whispering shadows creep into the town, twisting good guys into bad guys, and bad guys into freakier, even more horrors. This makes for several interesting new cards in the expansion, such as *Tombstone For Arms*, a recyclable weapon that allows you to slip your opponent silly and then get it back to do it all over again next turn. There's also *Widow's Squawk*, which lets you spawn an army of Silverhand Mephisto, Master of Evolution to recycle your creatures into bigger creatures, and *Faerie's Stighears*, who allows players to reap all the benefits on their "choose one" cards.

But not everything is flesh, some minions, such as the Faceless Defilement and Corrupted Meat-Gut, are just bigger, chunkier versions of non-standard favorites. Then there's the Flood of the Ancient One card, which, if you somehow manage to acquire two copies of it by the beginning of your next turn, conjures forth the



Ancient One, an incredibly powerful minion. Critics of *WoOG* claim these cards slow down the overall pace it takes to play a game. To them I say: Read anything by H.P. Lovecraft. Chess does not count and *Shoggoths* do not abide. Real eldritch horrors crawl, shamble and shamble!

Want to preview the expansion without dropping any cash? Simply signing on to *Hearthstone* will land you three packs of 30

322 cards, including the legendary Old God, C'thulhu, and two Becloner of Evil cards, for free.

Lastly, some advice for experienced players with dust (in-game currency gathered from extra cards and by winning ranked and arena games) to spare: you should be crafting Big Game Hunter and Outlawing. If it feels like you're coming up against C'thulhu, make sure to give the big guy as many things as to shoot at on the board as possible (that won't you)

MORRIS T. LAWRENCE



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CODEx GIGAS

BOHEMIA 12TH CENTURY

Written on animal skin, linked by a red mark and co-signed by the Devil himself, the Codex Gigas sounds like the premise of a horror film rather than a piece of history. Yet, it's real.

Written in early part of the 12th century, the Codex Gigas (Latin for "large book") has gained fame for not only being the physically largest manuscript from the medieval period (36" tall, 26" wide and 9" thick) but also for its sinister history. Often known as "the Devil's Bible" it contains a variety of texts, including the New and Old Testaments of the Bible, incantations, exorcism rites, medical advice and even grammar tips. One particular page, however, has been the source of the book's reputation; in the middle of the Codex Gigas lies an ominous painting of the Devil. There's little in the way of explanation for its inclusion and occultists have long viewed it as proof of some sort of supernatural pact, suggesting that the book contains some untapped power.

The book's origins have been traced back to the Benedictine monastery of Podlaska in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic). It's believed to have been written by a single scribe due to the consistency of the handwriting, and experts have estimated that if a single person worked on the book every day, it would have taken between five and 35 years to complete. Legend has it that a Benedictine monk was about to be punished for some untold wickedness by the elders of the monastery who sentenced him to be walled up alive and left to die. In a final attempt to save himself, the monk promised that he would write a book containing all human knowledge glorifying the monastery and to prove his devotion he would finish the volume in one night. At midnight the monk, fearing for his life and running out of time, prayed not to God but to the Devil. The Devil appeared and granted the monk enhanced productivity for one night to complete the book in exchange for the monk's soul.

The large drawing of the Devil is believed to be Satan's signature.

The monastery that bore the book was destroyed in the 15th century during the Hussite Revolution, and the book was passed around various

monasteries until it was taken to Prague as part of Emperor Rudolf II's private collection of books. Following the Thirty Years' War, the Swiss took the Codex as a spoil of war. It was moved to the royal castle in Stockholm. Its legend continued to grow when, in 1697, a fire engulfed the castle and the book was thrown out the window to prevent its destruction. During its fall, several pages came loose and were lost, leading to speculation that an ancient cult of Devil worshippers had set the fire in order to claim the most powerful pages of the book for themselves. The Codex was eventually rebound in the early 19th century, and remains on display in the Swiss National Library.

Literature and film are rife with quests for knowledge that become passageways for malevolent entities. H.P. Lovecraft

explored the power of evil through the written word with the books in the *Cthulhu Mythos*, Sam Rami's *Bill & Ted* series deals with demonic forces held by the *Alchemicon & Moris*, Lucio Fulci's *The Beyond* delves into the power of a book known as *Satan* (also present in Lovecraft's work), and Roman Polanski's *The Ninth Gate* features a book known for its ability to summon the Devil—to name a few.

The Codex Gigas is the original "evil book"—a source of fear and curiosity for centuries that defies categorization. Scholars have wondered about the nature of a man so determined to copy down all known knowledge that he dedicated his life to the cause, and believed that it couldn't be done without the presence of Satan himself. Its very existence is a horror story for the ages.

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